MAN MYTH & MAGIC

An illustrated encyclopedia of the supernatural
Published in 112 weekly parts Part 1

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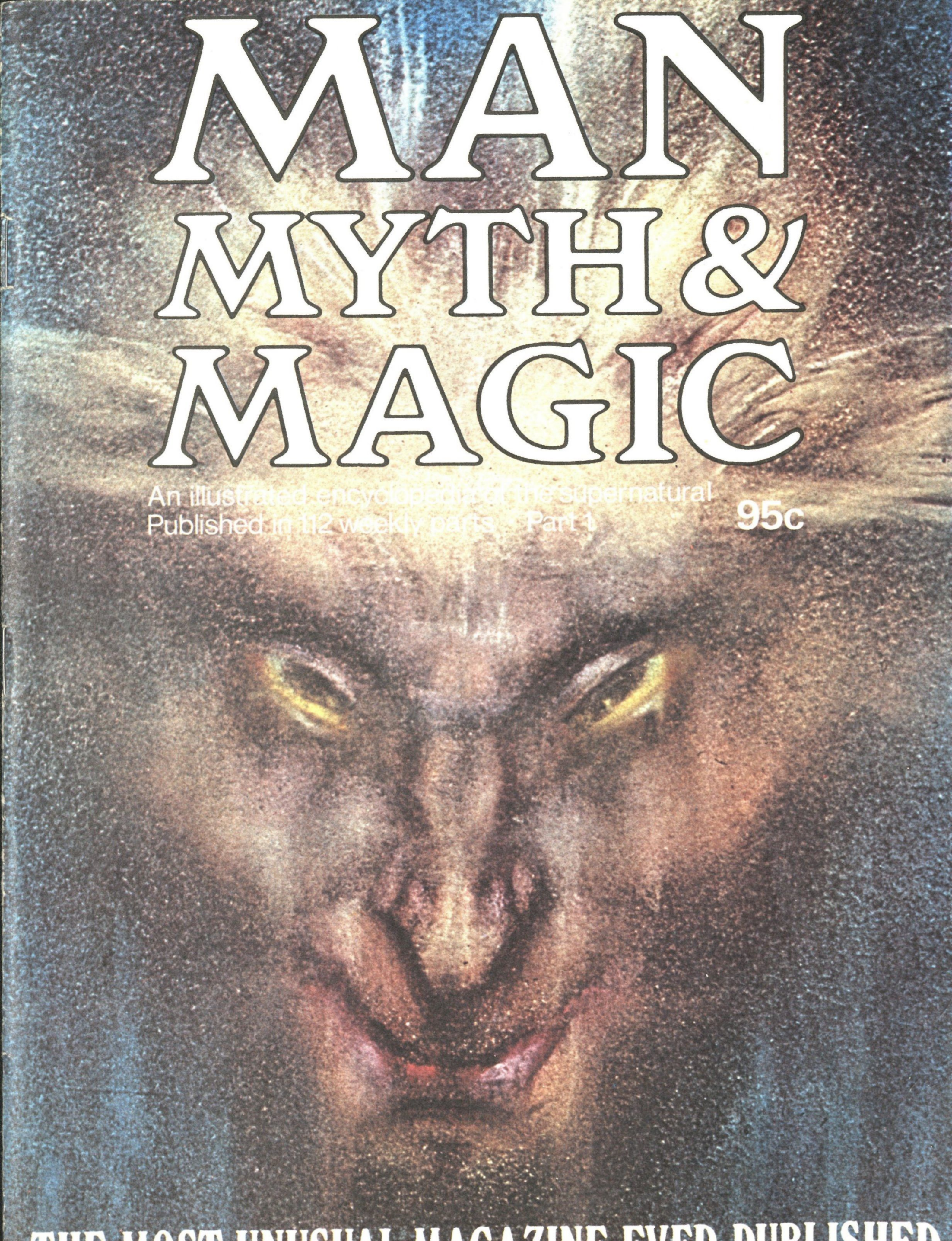

THE MOST UNUSUAL MAGAZINE EVER PUBLISHED

In 112 weekly issues, **MAN, MYTH and MAGIC** builds into the first comprehensive encyclopedia of its kind; more than 1,000 articles, totalling over 1,750,000 words, in 8 volumes; some 5,000 illustrations, many of them in full colour, drawn from ancient manuscripts, rare books, private collections, museums.

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Cover picture: Portrait of a demonic 'elemental' by Austin Osman Spare, who invented a method of conjuring up these creatures. *Kenneth Grant.*

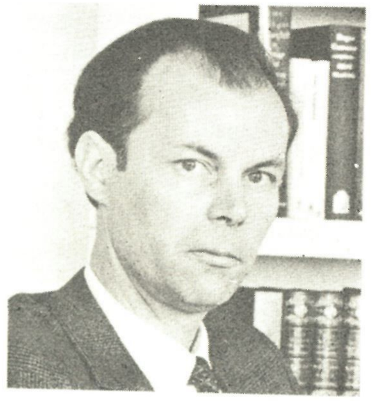
This Week's Authors

Part One begins with a general introduction to the supernatural. **Fenton Wyness** (writing on *Aberdeen Witches*) is an architect, artist and antiquarian, and a well-known writer on Scottish subjects. His *City by the Grey North Sea* is a history of Aberdeen and he has recently published a companion volume, *Royal Valley*, the story of the Aberdeenshire Dee. **James Wellard** (*Africa*) is a distinguished journalist and novelist, a war correspondent from 1941 to 1945, and subsequently for ten years a foreign correspondent. He has written extensively on North Africa and the Sahara. His book *The Great Sahara* is a history of exploration in the desert and *Lost Worlds of Africa* is the record of his own travels. He is the author of 12 books, including a novel set in Africa, *Deep is the Night.*

Denys Dyer (*Agrippa*) is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford where he has lectured in German literature since 1959. A specialist in German literature of the period 1500 to 1700 and in German drama of the 19th century, Dr Dyer was educated at the Universities of Cambridge and Zurich, and has held academic posts at Cambridge and Manchester. **R. C. Zaehner** (*Ahriman*) is Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford, a Fellow of All Souls, and a member of our Editorial Board. **Eric Maple** (*Aix-en-Provence*) is an expert on witches, demons, ghosts and folk-medicine. He began his studies of the occult by collecting legends of the Essex 'witch country'. A well-known lecturer and broadcaster, Mr Maple's books *The Dark World of Witches, The Realm of Ghosts, The Domain of Devils* and *Magic, Medicine and Quackery* have enjoyed great popularity.

EDITOR of MAN, MYTH and MAGIC

RICHARD CAVENDISH is a leading authority on magic and witchcraft. His book *The Black Arts;* a study of black magic in Europe published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, has been acclaimed for its combination of clarity and insight by critics on both sides of the Atlantic, and he has lectured and appeared on television and radio as an expert on these subjects. Educated at Christ's Hospital and Brasenose College, Oxford, Mr Cavendish has travelled widely in the Far East and the United States, and is the author of three novels.



SPECIAL CONSULTANTS

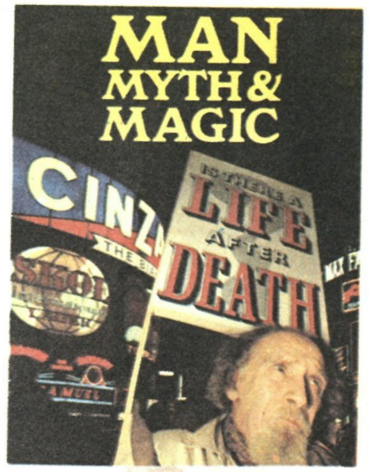
Rev. S. G. F. BRANDON is Professor of Comparative Religion and Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Manchester University. A Chaplain to the Forces during the war, he is the author of numerous books and the editor of a forthcoming *Dictionary of Comparative Religion.*

KATHARINE BRIGGS, President of the British Folk-Lore Society, has written several novels as well as books on folklore and fairies. She has recently completed her monumental *Dictionary of British Folk Tales.*

WILLIAM GAUNT, painter, art historian and critic, is special correspondent to the *Times* on art subjects. His books include *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy; The Aesthetic Adventure; The March of the Moderns; Arrows of Desire.*

FRANCIS HUXLEY is Ford Foundation Fellow in Social Anthropology at St Catherine's College, Oxford, and one of the most brilliant of British anthropologists. He is well-known for his book *The Invisibles,* a study of Voodoo.

JOHN LEHMANN has been a leading figure on the London literary scene since the 1930s as editor, publisher, poet, critic and champion of the work of many important modern writers. He continues to work on his impressive autobiography, three volumes of which have been published.

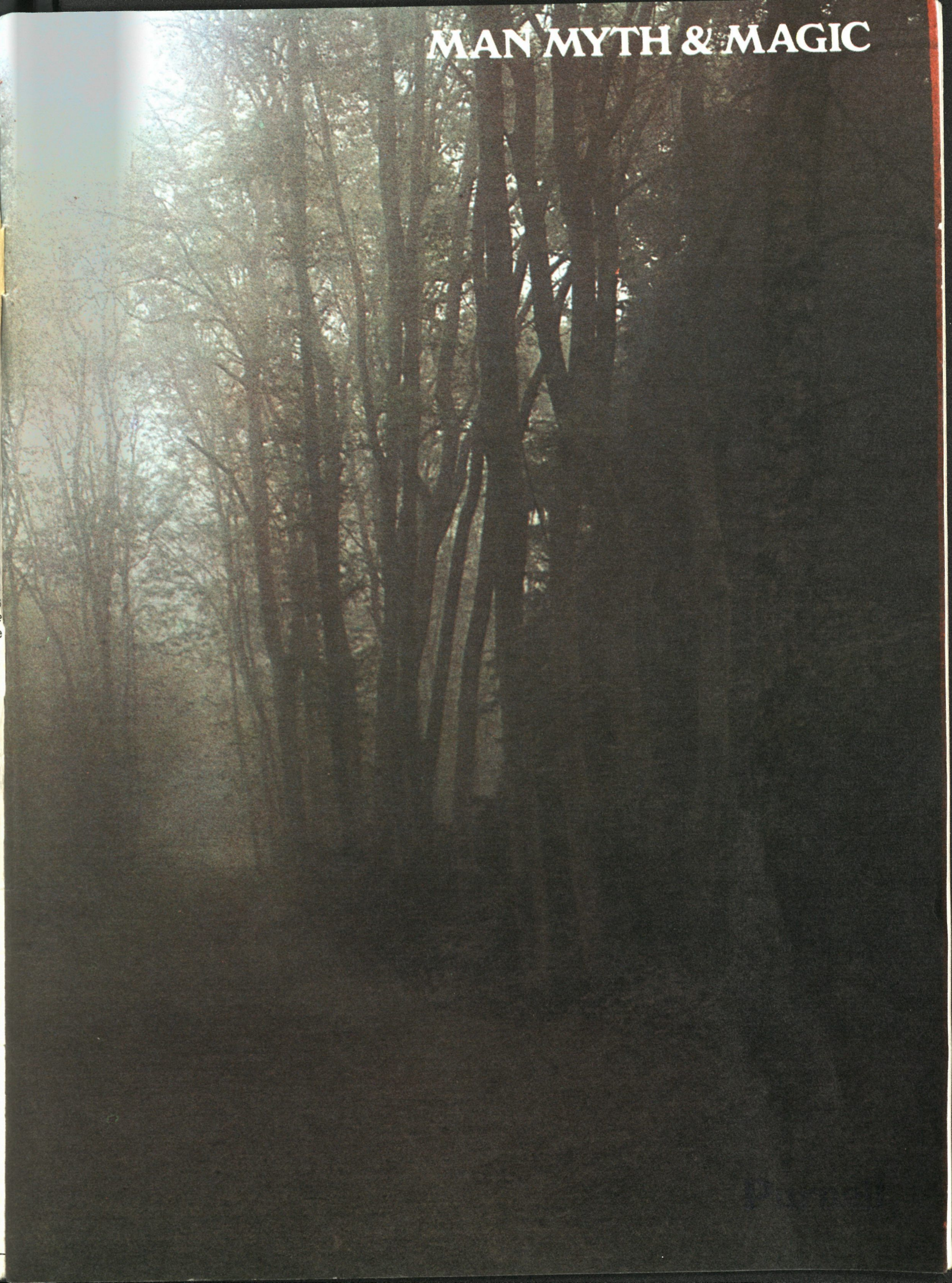


Part 2 goes on sale in two weeks

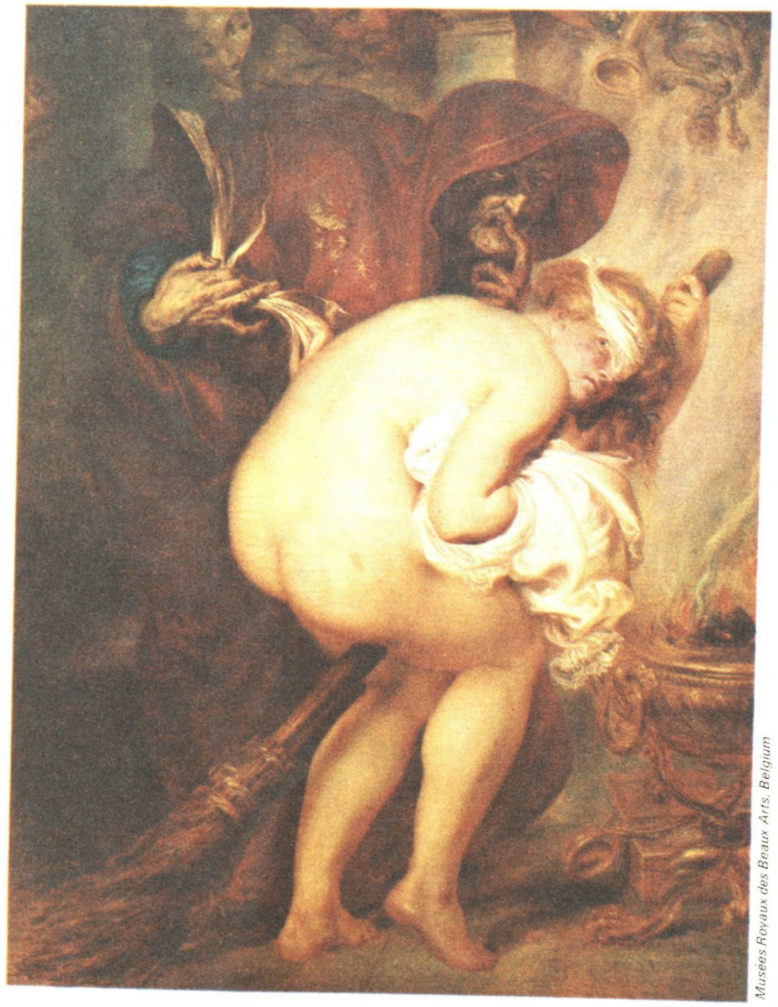
The introductory article on *Life After Death* sets the background to many future articles connected with this age-old question, which still perplexes, fascinates and frightens us – do men survive death?

Hans Biedermann writes on *Alchemy,* the attempt to make gold which was also a quest for spiritual perfection and in which C. G. Jung and other psychologists have seen a parallel to modern psychiatric healing. C. A. Burland, an Editorial Board member, deals with the religion, the myths and the neurotic and often homosexual medicine-men of the *Algonquin Indians.* In an article on the *Alphabet,* Richard Cavendish describes the belief in the magic power of letters, which flourishes today in numerology, a way of telling your fortune from the letters of your name.

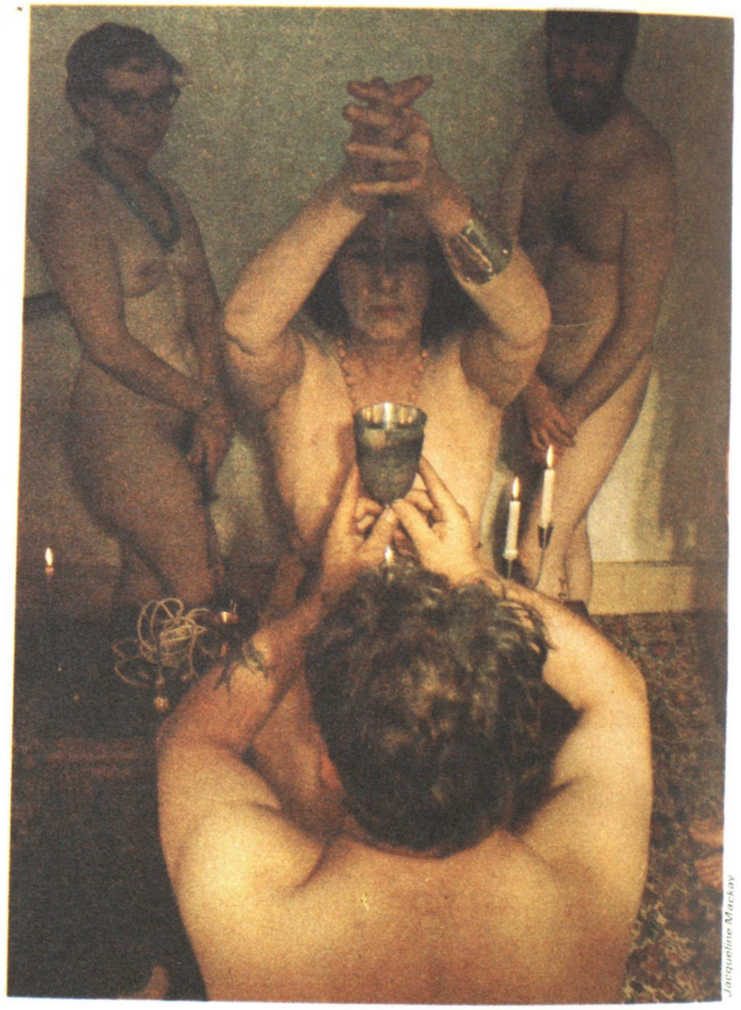
MAN MYTH & MAGIC



Man Myth & Magic is a complete encyclopedia of the supernatural. It explores this vast area of human speculation which is as full of contrast and colour, of darkness and light, as the mind of man himself



Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts, Belgium



Jacqueline Mackay

Witches are associated with demons, night, sensuality and evil. They still horrify and delight the imagination: and they still exist.

The Young Sorceress, a painting by A. Wiertz in which the aspiring sorceress, blindfolded, bestrides a broomstick, surrounded by malevolent figures. It has been suggested that witches originally danced with broomsticks between their legs as a phallic rite. They were said to fly on hobby horses, forked sticks, eggshells, bunches of straw and shovels: long before the broomstick was associated with them

Recent photograph of modern witches performing their rites

At last it is possible to bring discussion of the supernatural out of the dark - a privilege denied even to our parents...

Is There a Life After Death?

No one escapes death and yet from the beginning men have hoped and believed in a world beyond death. Mummification points to the belief in survival of death which goes back to the beginnings of human history and is suggested by Neanderthal burials more than 50,000 years ago. The rise of Spiritualism in the 19th century centred on the attempt to get in touch with the dead. The question haunts us still — is there life after death?

Mummified corpse of Rameses II, ruler of Egypt, who died in 1225 BC

William MacQuitty

Man, Myth and Magic is the first comprehensive encyclopedia of the supernatural, a fascinating exploration of mysteries as old as man himself. Who are we? Why were we born? Is there a spiritual life after death, or does each person have many lives on this earth? Are our destinies governed by fate, by chance, or by the will of the individual? Are there such things as ghosts? How does telepathy occur?

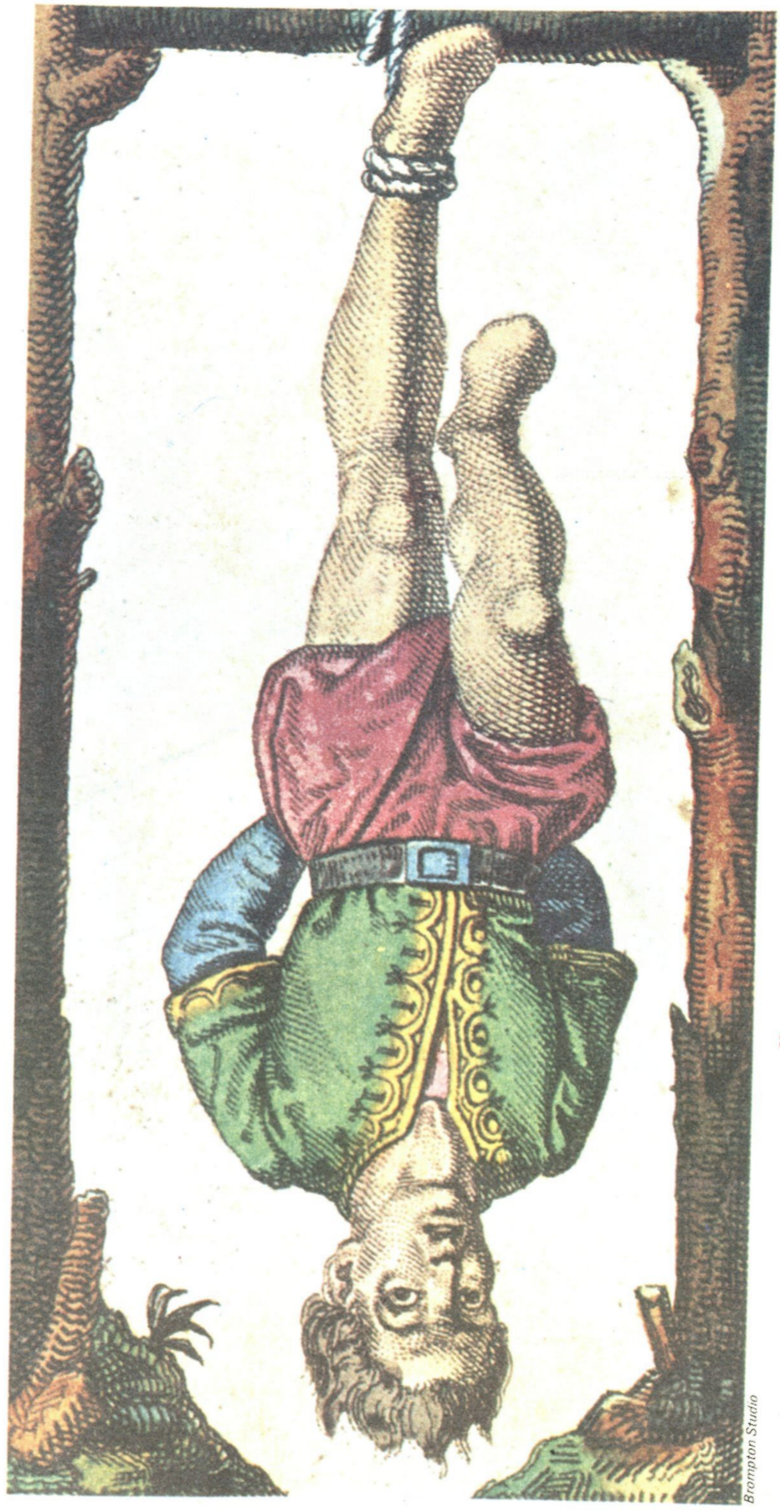
These questions touch on the realm of the supernatural – that vast and shadowy terrain which lies just beyond the experiences and landmarks of everyday realities – which we sometimes glimpse in our dreams, know through faith, or shrink from in moments of fear. The modern achievements of science and technology have done little to explore this other world and provided few more answers to its mysteries than the rituals and superstitions of the most primitive peoples. Indeed, it is in Twentieth Century industrial societies that educated, affluent and sophisticated people, in ever-increasing numbers, have discovered a vitality in religion; revived an interest in occult philosophies and Eastern practices such as meditation and yoga; been attracted by astrology and divination by cards; and even had a strange fascination for the bizarre and the satanic.

The word supernatural has been used to classify many types of phenomena, primarily those events – such as miracles, visions and premonitions – which cannot be explained by the known laws of nature. But man's idea of the supernatural has changed according to his knowledge. To early man a flash of lightning seemed terrifying evidence of wrathful gods. One hundred years ago a vivid dream might have been interpreted as a message from the Almighty, rather than from the unconscious mind of the sleeper.

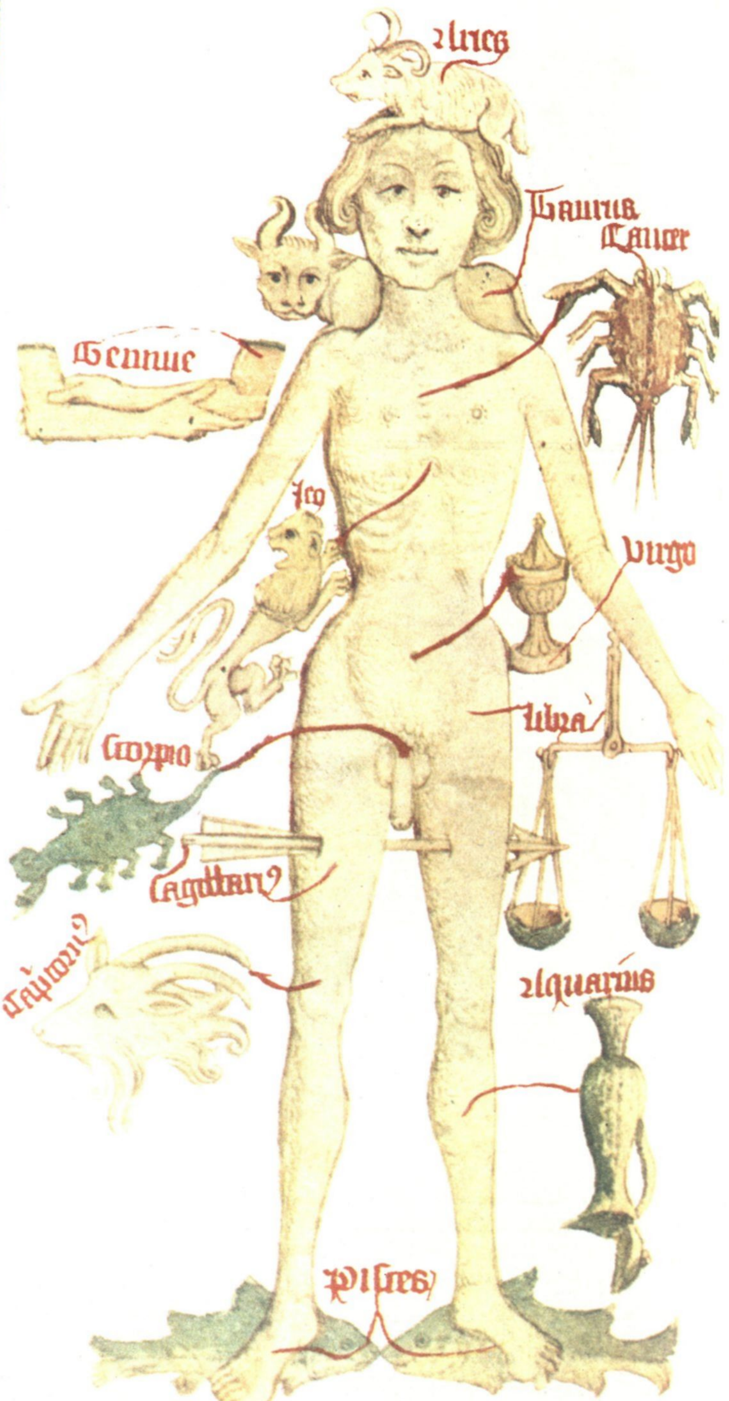
From the theories of the pioneering psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung have emerged important clues to the mysteries of the world inside every man – the beauty, the wonder and the terrors of the human mind. Today, in distinguished institutes in the U.S. and the Soviet Union, scientists and doctors probe the still untapped powers of the mind – the faculty of extra-sensory perception; telepathy; precognition; clairvoyance and the possibilities of mind over matter – and relentlessly investigate world-wide reports of psychic and paranormal occurances. Already the evidence is building up which could establish 'supernatural manifestations' as capacities natural to man.

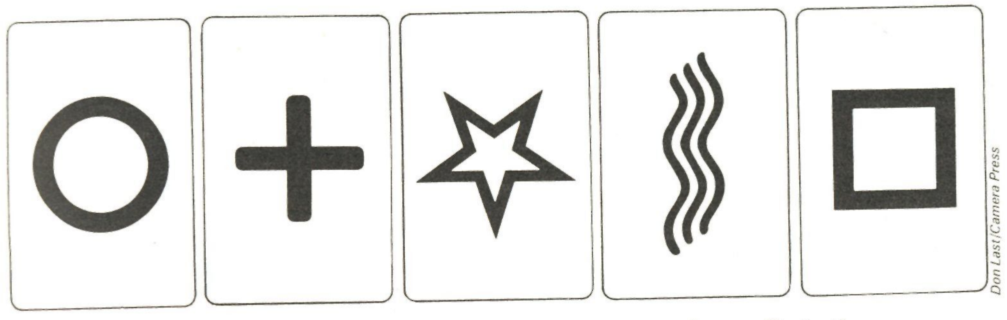
It is this still dark side of the mind of man, the dimension which baffles cool reason and hard fact, which *Man, Myth and Magic* examines. For the first time the full range of this fascinating subject has been assembled in a single authoritative work of reference. All the facets of man's experience are brought together as a whole, to provide you with a unique study of man and the supernatural which takes you deep into the resources of your own mind – your inheritance, your uniqueness and your future.

Every time you cross your fingers, say a prayer, or read your 'stars' in the paper, you express your surviving belief in the supernatural. This is a unique opportunity to make up your own mind on this vital area of human experience



Brompton Studio





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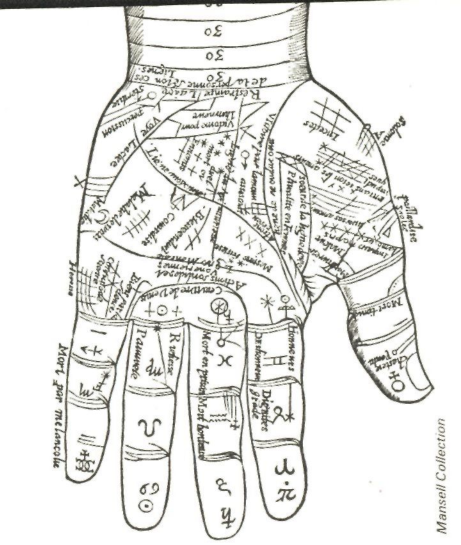


Mansell Collection

MAN – From his beginning man has sought his own true identity. In order to define himself, he had to define his universe; before he could understand his role in life, he had to try to understand the mysteries of life itself. So from his perceptions and needs, his hopes and fears he discovered beliefs to direct his life; beliefs which differed as men differ; which fragmented and grew with men's needs. You will discover humanity's seekers in darkness and the many paths they have followed. You will read of all the great religious leaders, their teachings and techniques. You will encounter visionaries, occultists and magicians; mediums and mystics, illusionists, charlatans and saints; man in all his guises, from Adam to the Zulu witch-doctor.

Uncover the inspirations and explanations offered through history by artists, poets and musicians; psychiatrists and medicine men. Study the creative works of man from the alphabet and drama to Surrealism and the wheel, all those things with which man has shaped his dreams and given form to his thoughts.

The founder of Modern Theosophy, Madame Blavatsky; the psychic healer, Edgar Cayce; the magician, Aleister Crowley; the Druid priests; Freemasons; Holy Rollers; Joan of Arc; the prophet, Nostradamus; the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam; the Greek mathematician and philosopher, Pythagoras; the diabolical Russian monk, Rasputin; the Little Flower St. Theresa of Avila; the Tarot interpreter, A. E. Waite; all of them await you.

MYTH – From the cradle to the grave our lives are filled with ritual and symbols. Imagination and insight have been man's instinctive tools for mythology, from the simplest creation tales of primitive peoples to the most mind-stretching science fiction of the present day. Classical myths have come down to us from forgotten men, not because they were an attempt to record actual events but because they contain truths about the human condition. Ancient folklore from widely separated regions and peoples contains amazing similarities in details and characters, because there are ideals and necessities which are common to all men. That we still live with myths is evidenced by the fact that we still observe taboos, still follow customs, still maintain the cults of heroes. We have simply exchanged Hercules and Ulysses for James Bond. We still retain a powerful impulse to try our luck and an unreasonable horror of tempting fate.

Rediscover the fabulous creatures and enchanted lands that belong to your past: Atlantis, Camelot, Paradise; genies and giants; dragons and unicorns; mermaids and centaurs; vampires and werewolves.

Mythology leads you to a re-assessment of the doctrines of the world's major religions, an appreciation for the many paths of man to God and an understanding of the men who follow them, whether Australian aborigines, Buddhists, Christians, gypsies, Jews, North American Indians, Tibetan lamas or yogis. The life styles, artistic expressions of beliefs and manners of worship of these and others are detailed, along with introductions to unfamiliar cults and practices ranging from the eccentric to the profound.

MAGIC – As evocative as it is timeless, the idea of magic conjures up a richness of images and deeply-rooted attitudes within man. The use of analogies, allegories and symbols demonstrates the magical way of thinking natural to man in his attempts to find the connections between all the dissimilar and contradictory things in the world and in his insistent efforts to transform and control his environment and events.

The medieval alchemists who sought to transform base metals into precious gold represent the eternal quest of man for power over destiny and assurance of immortality. Sorcery, spells and magical names and numbers all fulfill a universal longing to understand and dominate the forces which govern man.

Man, Myth and Magic reveals the lore of magic in all its aspects, from the sublime to the sinister. Out-of-the-body experiences of the astral plane; the blood-curdling Black Mass; the Elixir of Life and the Evil Eye; incantations and magical devices; necromancy, the calling up of the dead; psychic attacks and curses; Satanism; sex magic; talismans and the Tarot; angels and evil spirits; these are some of the masks of magic.

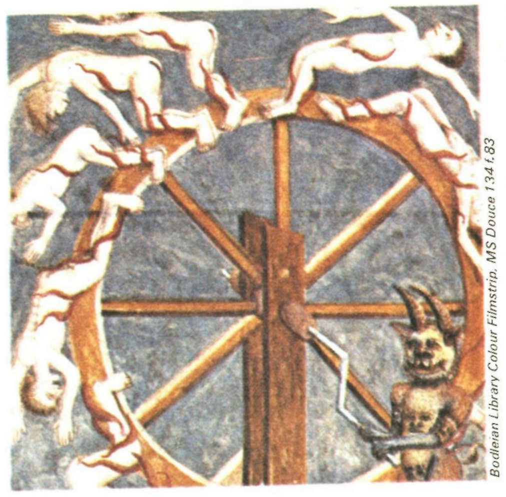
Magical, too, are the more familiar puzzles which researchers approach as paranormal – dowsing; faith healing; ouija boards; poltergeists; Spiritualism – all of the unusual observations and surprises of man.

The entries in *Man, Myth and Magic* are arranged in alphabetical order, for both ease of reference and variety in reading: you will find alchemy followed by Algonquin Indians; conversion followed by Convulsionaries, a hysterical sect of the Eighteenth Century; zombies followed by Zoroaster, the ancient god of Persia. The expressions of the human mind, from the noblest to the humorous and the degraded are the material for this encyclopedia. Its scope will enrich your own experience of the supernatural. Bring the supernatural into your own natural world with *Man, Myth and Magic*.

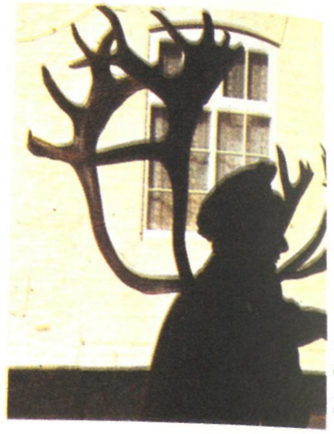
Fate and the Future

We long to know the future, and search for it in the stars and the hand, in cards and numbers.

1 The Hanged Man, a card from the Tarot pack, still used in fortune-telling 2 Astrological diagram showing the parts of the body which each zodiac sign is supposed to affect 3 Testing the reality of extrasensory perception, the subject tries to forecast the fall of these cards 4 The pattern of the future in the human hand, from Jean Belot's Oeuvres, 1649 5 The wheel is a symbol of inevitable Fate, here an instrument of torture on which the proud are broken in hell



Bodleian Library Colour Filmstrip, MS Douce 134 f.83



Brian Shuel

Abbots Bromley
Scene of the annual Horn Dance in September; no one knows how old the dance is but its closest parallels are the ritual dances of primitive societies, reaching back to the Stone Age.
See HORNS.

After the executions of the Aberdeen witches in 1597, it was said that the black reek and stench of the burnings hung over the town for weeks. The victims were strangled to death before their bodies were burned. Many innocent people were undoubtedly accused but there is some evidence for the existence of a real witch organization in north-east Scotland

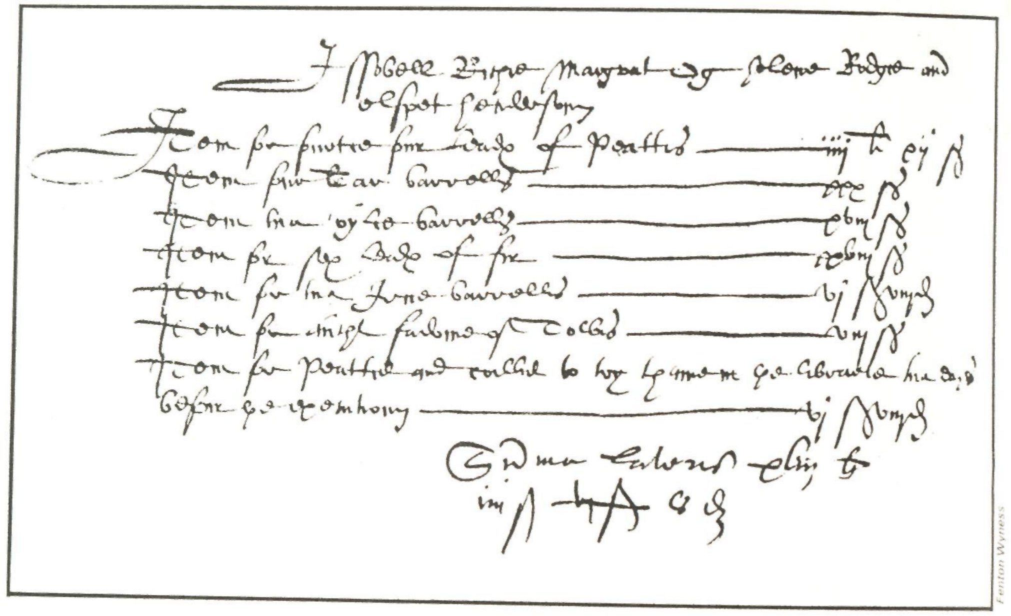
ABERDEEN WITCHES

IN THE ARCHIVES of the city of Aberdeen is a remarkable collection of documents (*Records of the Dean of Guild, 1596–1597*) which give details of the proceedings against many persons accused of 'the detestable practice of witchcraft and sorcery'. Marginal notes indicate that the documents were those used in court, most of them consisting of 'dittays', or charges against the accused.

The collection of evidence against those suspected of witchcraft and sorcery was made by the ministers and elders of the Reformed Church in the various parishes. Unhappily, suspects could be named by anyone – a feature that afforded full scope to the malicious – and many harmless old people were named. Suspects were summoned before the Kirk Sessions for examination and those considered guilty were remanded to Aberdeen Assizes. Even when allowance is made for the ignorance and superstition of the time, it is difficult to excuse the ministers of the Gospel, educated men, whose evidence was the means of sending many innocent people to a horrible end.

However, some of the evidence suggests that there existed a definite organization practising the black art in north-east Scotland; the group known to history as the Aberdeen witches.

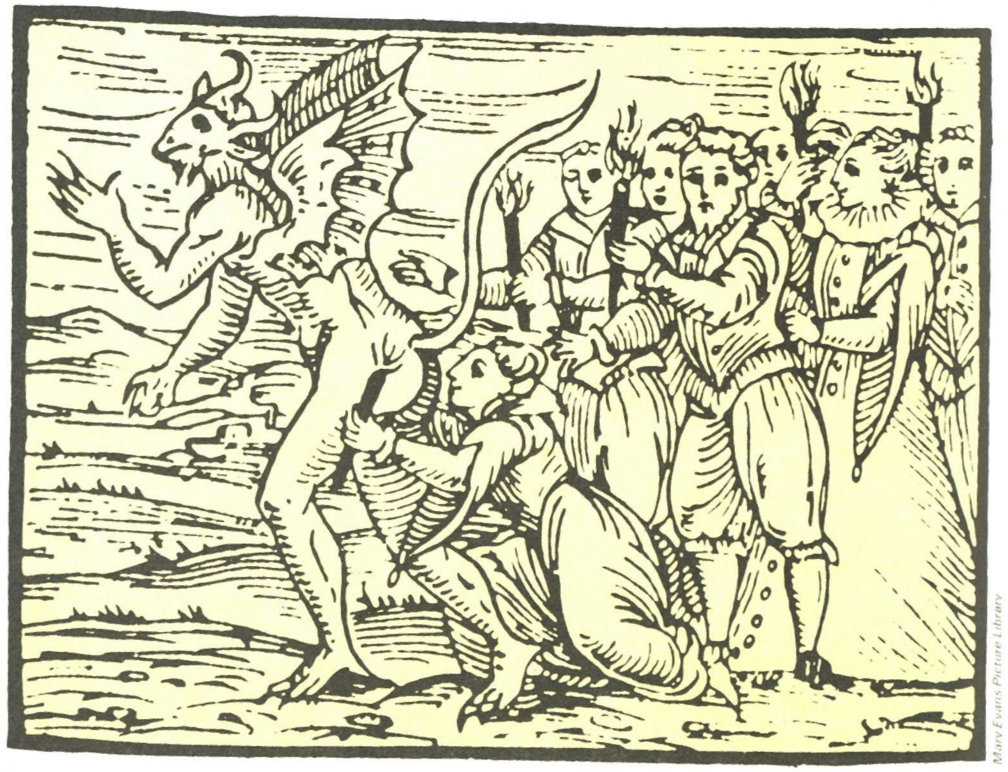
Two main points can be established concerning the group. First, the practice of witchcraft was a confidential cult, almost a family concern, its secrets handed down from generation to generation. Secondly, it was well organized, and although each of its members operated individually in their own localities each was required to attend general meetings, to take part in the ceremonies and for instruction in 'working woe' (doing harm).



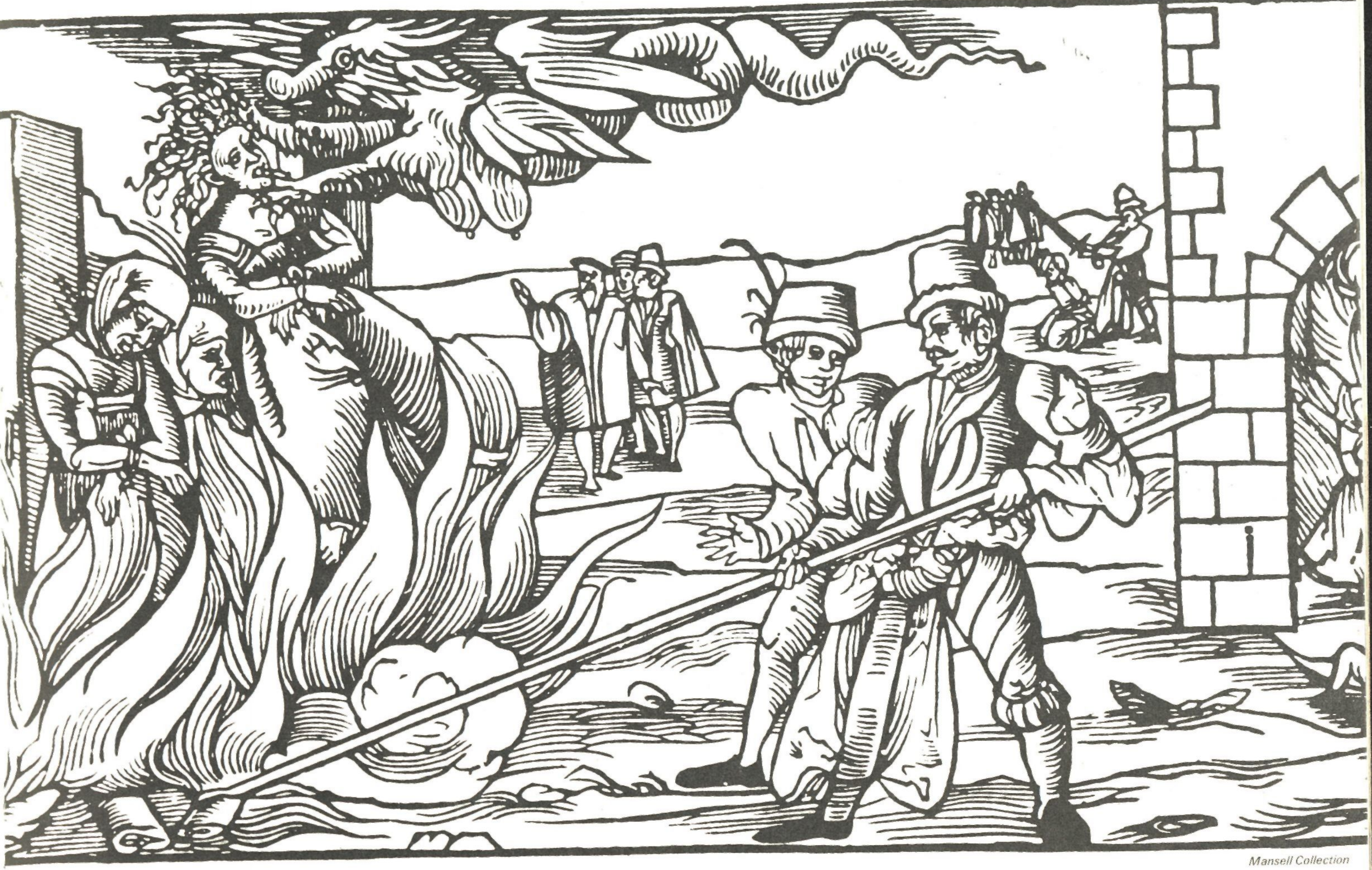
Fenton Wyness

Above **Part of the accounts of money spent on the execution of four witches. These include items for coal, peat, tar barrels, the stake, rope, and the fee of the executioner**

Below **Witches were frequently accused of paying bestial and revolting homage to the Devil by kissing his backside: from Guazzo's *Compendium Maleficarum*, 17th century**



Mary Evans Picture Library



Mansell Collection

The European obsession with witchcraft raged for about 300 years. In Germany, as in Scotland and France, it was the custom to strangle or hang the witches before burning them to ashes. Burning three witches at Derneburg, Germany, in 1555

The Devil and the Queen of Elphen

The witches were organized in covens – groups of 13. At the general meetings the Devil himself presided, usually 'in the likeness of a great grey stag, boar or dog'. Presumably he was a man dressed as an animal. The meetings were said to involve dancing and sexual relations with the Devil – who went under the name of Christsonday – and with a woman called the Queen of Elphen (queen of the elves) who, 'is said to be very pleasant, and she can seem old or young when she pleases, and she makes whoever she likes king, and lies with whoever she likes'. They were accused of saluting the Devil and the Queen by kissing them on the buttocks. There seems to have been no age limit on entrance and many of the accused testified to having been introduced as young children.

Each member of a coven specialized in some particular form of sorcery and these covered a wide range. Isobel Cockie bewitched mills and livestock, while Margaret Ogg devoted her attentions to butcher-meat with dire results; Helen Rogie brought illness and death by modelling figures of her victims in lead or wax, and Isobel Strachan was notorious as a fascinator of nice young men; Isobel Ritchie made a special line in confectionery for expectant mothers, while Isobel Ogg's forte was the raising of storms. It would seem that the witches had one faculty which was common to all, that of causing 'the sudden sickness' whereby their victims lay 'one half of the day roasting as if in an oven, with an unquenchable thirst, the other half of the day melting away with an extraordinary cold sweat'.

Perhaps the most dramatic moment in the Aberdeen Assizes came when Andrew Man turned king's evidence against his colleagues. A witch from boyhood and the father of several children by the Queen of Elphen, he convinced the Court that, with his long and extensive experience, he was in the unique position of being able to identify any witch or warlock brought before him. Accordingly, he was appointed official witch-finder to the Assizes and with a three-inch needle pricked the suspects' bodies for the 'Devil's Mark' – a spot insensible to pain and believed to be inflicted by the Devil.

Strangled by the Executioner

While awaiting trial, the suspects were confined either in the cells of the Tolbooth or in Our Lady's Pity-vault, for the Reformation had brought degradation to this place of worship. A number of the accused took their own lives in prison and their bodies were thrown outside to be dragged through the streets until their battered, shapeless carcasses were unrecognizable.

When the Assizes closed in April 1597, 24 people – 23 women and one man – had been found guilty of witchcraft. All were condemned to death – 'to be taken out between the hills, bound to a stake, strangled by the executioner, and their bodies burnt to ashes'. The few whose guilt was 'not proven' were ordered to be branded on the cheek and banished. The final tragic scene took place 'between the hills', in the grassy hollow lying between Aberdeen's Castle-hill and the neighbouring Heading-hill – the depression now covered by Commerce Street – and the 'black reek and stench from the burnings hung over the burgh for many weeks'.

At one stage in the Assizes, it appeared that the number of executions would increase and the Dean of Guild, fearing rising costs might prejudice the burnings, took it upon himself to lay in a supply of coal to the value of £26 4s. His foresight paid dividends as shown by the final entry in the records dated 21 September 1597, which states that the provost, baillies and council 'considering the faithfulness shown by William Dun, the Dean of Guild, in the discharge of his duty, and, besides this, his extraordinary taking pains on the great number of witches burnt this year and to encourage others to work as diligently in the discharge of their office, grant and assign to him the sum of £47 3s 4d'.

Before the end of the year and while the subject of witchcraft and sorcery was still in people's minds, King James VI of Scotland (later James I of England) published his book *Demonologie* in defence of witch hunting. It proved to be a best seller.

FENTON WYNESS

ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN of the Himalayas is supposed to be a creature half-human and half-animal, hairy and about the size of a child of 12 or 14, which walks erect on two legs, swinging its arms. Its hair is described as reddish or light brown, and not very thick. European travellers called the snowman 'abominable' because of the horror with which the Sherpas, a Himalayan people, regard the creatures which they call *yeti*.

Expeditions have searched without success for the yeti. Mountaineers have found what were thought to be its footprints in the snow, but research has revealed that these tracks were made by other animals. Anthropologists have shown that the Sherpas' stories are questionable, and the view that the snowman is a legend is now widely accepted. Legends of hairy mountain-men have also been reported from the Gobi desert, Mongolia and the Rockies near Canada's Pacific coast.

According to Sherpa folklore a monkey king was converted to Buddhism and lived as a hermit in the mountains. An ogress fell in love with him and he abandoned his solitary life to marry her. The children she bore him were covered in hair and had tails, and they were the first yeti.

Popperfoto

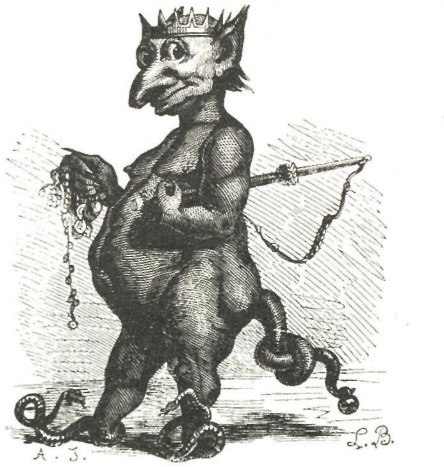
A Tibetan holding a cap allegedly made from the scalp of a yeti. It has been shown that these caps are really made of deer-hide

ABRACADABRA

THE WORD ABRACADABRA has been so widely used in magic that it has passed into the patter of the stage conjuror and appears in dictionaries as a term for magical nonsense-words in general. Daniel Defoe, in his *Journal of the Plague Year*, published in 1722, says that many people who were terrified of the plague acted as if it was an evil spirit which threatened to take possession of their bodies. They tried to ward it off with 'certain words or figures, as particularly the word Abracadabra formed in a triangle or pyramid.'

In the Middle Ages the word was believed to cure fevers. The earliest instructions for using it come from a poem on medicine by Quintus Serenus Sammonicus, a doctor who accompanied the Roman Emperor Severus on his expedition to Britain in 208 AD. It has to be written down, dropping a letter in each line. The usual way of writing it is:

A B R A C A D A B R A
A B R A C A D A B R
A B R A C A D A B
A B R A C A D A
A B R A C A D
A B R A C A
A B R A C
A B R A
A B R
A B
A



'Abracax', a demon with snakes for feet, associated with abracadabra. From Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal*, 1863

The paper on which the word is written must be tied round the patient's neck with flax, worn for nine days, and then thrown backwards over the shoulder into a stream which runs eastwards.

The idea is evidently that as the word shrinks away to nothing, so will the fever. Several other shrinking charms of this kind are known, including a Jewish spell against a demon named Shabriri, thought to cause diseases of the eye. To get rid of him, you say Shabriri Briri Riri Iri Ri, whittling him away to nothing.

Abracadabra resembles, and may be descended from, a Jewish cure for fever:

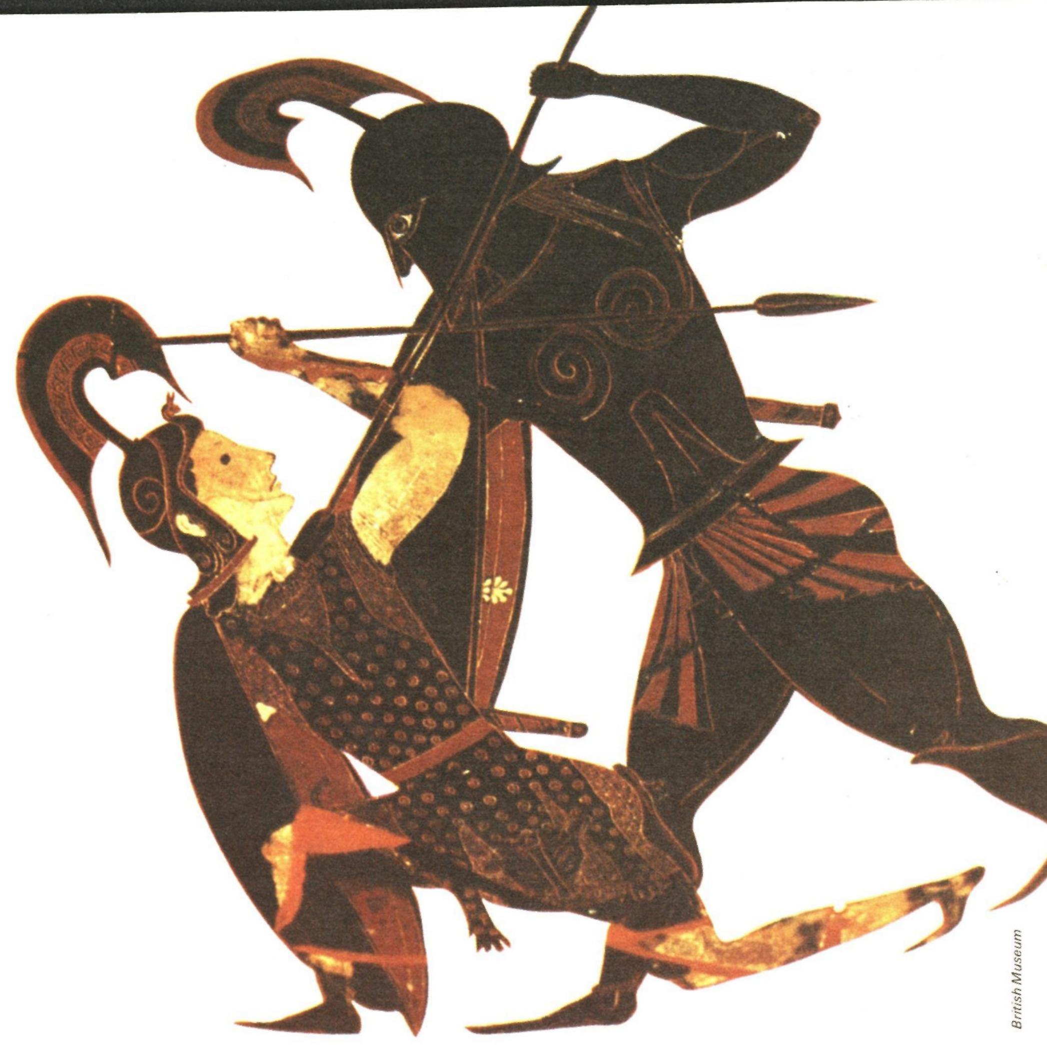
> Ab Abr Abra Abrak Abraka
> Abrakal Abrakala Abrakal
> Abraka Abrak Abra Abr Ab
>
> And the people called unto Moses and Moses prayed to God and the fire abated. May healing come from heaven from all kinds of fever and consumption – heat to N son of N.
>
> Amen Amen Amen. Selah Selah Selah.

This must also be hung round the patient's neck, and he must not look at it for the next 24 hours. It apparently builds the heat of the fever up to breaking-point and then makes it dwindle away, as 'the fire' abates.

Another possibility is that Abracadabra is connected with Abraxas, a god who appears on magical charms, gems and rings used to ward off evil from the 2nd century AD onwards. Abraxas originated with the followers of an eccentric Christian thinker named Basilides, who taught at Alexandria from about 120 to 140. One of his theories was that Jesus had not really been crucified.

The followers of Basilides seem to have constructed the name Abraxas for the god who ruled each year and its 365 days. The letters of the Greek alphabet also stood for numbers, and the Greek letters of Abraxas add to 365. Below this god were 365 orders of spirits, occupying 365 heavens, the lowest of which was the domain of the spirits who rule the Earth. The seven letters of Abraxas may stand for the seven planets known in antiquity, believed in astrology to control the workings of fate.

The central character of Homer's Iliad was honoured as a semi-divine being, and his effect on Western ideas of 'the hero' has lasted to the present day


British Museum

The greatest of the Homeric heroes and the central character of the *Iliad*, Achilles was later worshipped as a semi-divine being. Famed for his savagery in battle, he is here shown slaying Penthesilea, the queen of the Amazons. From an Attic amphora

ACHILLES

THE PLOT OF THE *Iliad*, one of the most blood-drenched stories ever told, turns on the pride and the ungovernable temper of Achilles (Achilleus in Greek), the most formidable of the Greek champions who laid siege to Troy. 'The Wrath of Achilles is my theme', Homer begins, 'that fatal wrath which . . . sent the gallant souls of many noblemen to Hades, leaving their bodies as carrion for the dogs and passing birds.'

The *Iliad* is usually dated to the 8th century BC. It is quite possible that Achilles was originally a real man, however legendary the exploits with which Homer and later authors credited him. Homer calls him 'the great runner' for his skill as an athlete and 'the city-sacker' for his prowess as a fighter. In Hesiod, who wrote some years after Homer, he is 'lion-hearted Achilles, the destroyer of men'. Later still, as a result of the fame which the *Iliad* brought him, he was honoured in many parts of the Greek world as a hero, a being halfway between a god and a man.

At the village of Achilleum near Troy there was a temple sacred to Achilles and a statue of the hero wearing, oddly enough, a woman's earring. At Elis on the Greek mainland he had a monument and on a certain day, towards sunset, the women of Elis honoured him by lamenting his death. He had a temple and a statue on Leuce, the White Island in the Black Sea opposite the mouths of the Danube, where offerings were made to him and games were held in his honour. It was said that passing sailors heard his voice across the water, reciting Homer to the accompaniment of the clash of battle and the thunder of horses' hooves.

The Wrath of Achilles

The story of the *Iliad* begins, in the tenth year of the siege of Troy, when the Greek supreme commander, Agamemnon, seized a beautiful slave-girl who had been allotted to Achilles as a prize of battle. Insulted, Achilles refused to fight any more and his absence gravely weakened the Greek resistance to fierce Trojan attacks. Agamemnon tried to make the quarrel up, offering to return the girl to Achilles with many splendid gifts. But Achilles was still nursing his fury and refused to be reconciled.

Lacking Achilles, the situation of the Greeks now became so dangerous that Patroclus, the dearly loved friend of Achilles, went out to fight the Trojans. Patroclus was killed by the best of the Trojan warriors, Hector. When this news was brought to him, Achilles gave a loud and dreadful cry, and his mother, the sea-nymph Thetis, hurried to him from the depths of the ocean. He told her that he was determined to take his revenge by joining the battle and killing Hector. Weeping, Thetis told him that he would seal his own fate, 'for after Hector's death you are doomed forthwith to die'. Achilles rose nobly to this challenge:

> Then *let* me die forthwith, since I have failed to save my friend from death. He has fallen, far from his motherland, wanting my help in his extremity. So now, since I shall never see my home again, since I have proved a broken reed to Patroclus and all my other comrades whom Prince Hector killed, and have sat here by my ships, an idle burden on the earth, I, the best man in all the Achaean force, the best in battle . . . As for my death, when Zeus and the other deathless gods appoint it, let it come.

Berserk with grief and rage, Achilles sounded his terrible warcry. 'The Trojans were utterly confounded. Achilles' cry was as piercing as the trumpet call that rings out when a city is beset by murderous enemies; and their hearts all turned to water when they heard that brazen voice. Even the long-maned horses felt something evil in the wind . . .'

Next day, Achilles fought in fury, 'like a driving wind that whirls the flames this way and that, when a conflagration rages in the gullies on a sun-baked mountain-side, and the high forest is consumed. He chased his victims with the fury of a fiend, and the earth was dark with blood'. His horses trampled over dead men and fallen shields as he raged on in search of glory, until he found Hector and killed him in single combat, gloating over the Trojan's death agony.

Achilles maltreated Hector's corpse, dragging it in the dust behind his chariot, and he intended to throw it to the dogs to gnaw. But Hector's father persuaded him to return the body to the Trojans so that it could be decently buried.

The *Iliad* ends with the funeral rites for Hector but it is clear that Achilles has not long to live and that he will be killed by Hector's brother Paris and the archer-god Apollo. The *Odyssey* describes his death in battle, with the flower of the Greek and Trojan warriors falling round him in the struggle over his corpse. The sea-nymphs came from the ocean to weep salt tears for him and the nine Muses sang his dirge. His bones were mingled with those of his friend Patroclus and buried outside Troy.

Something Superhuman

Achilles has all the virtues of the Homeric hero. He is brave, passionate, ferocious in battle, beautiful to look at, intensely proud, fated to an early death. His failing is his uncontrollable anger. His treatment of Hector's corpse is so savage that Homer calls it 'shameful outrage' and condemns as 'an evil thing' his slaughter of a dozen Trojan prisoners at the funeral of Patroclus. When Hector's father comes to beg for his son's body, Achilles tries to console him and mercifully gives him the corpse. But even then he is sufficiently aware of his weakness to be afraid that he may suddenly fly into a rage and kill the old man.

The original meaning of the Greek word *heros* is 'a gentleman', a man of good family. The Homeric heroes were warrior-aristocrats, lovers of war and sport and feasting, living to win honour in their own days and fame thereafter. One of the characters in Plato's *Symposium* asks whether Achilles would have died to avenge Patroclus except in the belief that the memory of his own immortal valour would survive, 'the memory which we now preserve'.

The heroes lived their lives to the hilt and they had no hope of a happy life beyond death. The Homeric after-world was a wretched, bloodless place and in the *Odyssey* the ghost of Achilles says that he would rather be the poorest labourer alive than king of all the dead. But though they loved life, they loved renown still more and for its sake they took the lives of other men and sacrificed their own. Like many men since, they preferred death to dishonour.

Hesiod thought of the heroes as halfway between gods and men, and later Greeks also saw something superhuman about them. They had transcended the normal limitations of human nature and many of them, so strong in life, were thought to be still powerful in death. The living paid them honours and called on them for help.

Achilles' Heel

Many of the best-known stories about Achilles appear in later writers, including some which have parallels in folk tales all over the world, like the story that his mother tried to make him immortal by dipping him into a fire, but her husband thought she was trying to kill the child and stopped her. A famous variant of this is that she dipped him in the Styx, the river of the underworld, which made all of him deathproof except the heel by which she held him. It was in this heel that he received his mortal wound, from an arrow fired by Paris or Apollo.

His mother, Thetis, was so beautiful that both Zeus and the sea-god Poseidon desired her. But she was fated to bear a son who would be mightier than his father, and when the two gods heard this their ardour cooled, and they gave her in marriage to a mortal named Peleus. It was at the wedding of Thetis and Peleus that the apple marked 'for the fairest' was thrown among the gods, the apple of discord that caused the Trojan War in which Achilles met his death.

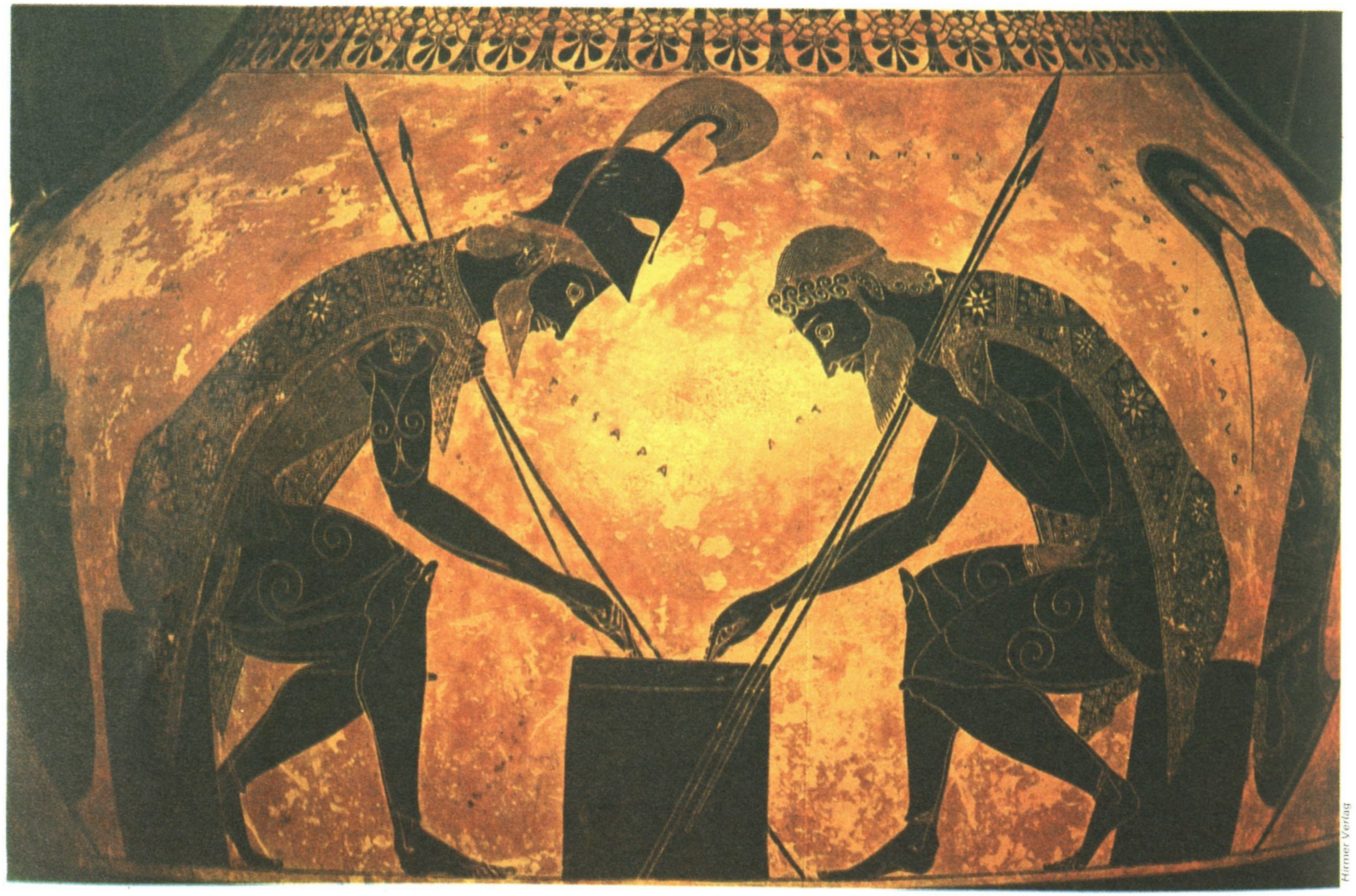
Achilles was only a boy when the Greek armies gathered for the siege of Troy. His mother hid him on the island of Scyros, where he was dressed as a girl and brought up with the king's daughters. But the crafty Odysseus came to Scyros bringing presents of cloth for dressmaking and also a spear and a shield. Achilles revealed himself by ignoring the cloth and seizing the weapons. What name Achilles bore when hidden among the women is an old problem. One suggestion is that he was called Pyrrha, 'redhead', for the colour of his hair.

At Troy, after the death of Hector, Achilles is said to have defeated various other notable fighters, including Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, a tribe of warrior women, who had come to fight on the Trojan side. When he had killed her with a spear-thrust, he was so smitten by her beauty that he made love to her dead body.

Some said that Achilles and Patroclus were homosexual lovers. There is no such suggestion in Homer but the accusation was made against many famous figures.

Most of these later stories, to a modern eye at least, tend to lessen the stature of the hero, as compared with the picture of him in Homer. But there is a suitably grim tale in the *Hecuba* of Euripides. After the fall of Troy, the ghost of Achilles rose in the sheen of golden armour and stood high on the crest of his tomb, demanding his share of the spoil, in the shape of Polyxena, daughter of the king of Troy. The Greeks slaughtered the girl on Achilles' grave-mound, so that she could accompany her new master to the after-world, and the blood welled from her neck over her golden robes.

FURTHER READING: Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, translated by E. V. Rieu (Penguin, 1950 and 1946); M. Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962); R. Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Penguin, 1955). See also M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (Penguin, 1967).



Achilles, on the left, gaming with another Greek leader, Ajax. Games and contests of all kinds were dear to the hearts of the warrior-aristocrats who were Homer's heroes. Achilles seems to have won, as beside him is written the Greek for 'four', while beside Ajax is 'three'. From an amphora, c 530 BC

Hirmer Verlag

This Chinese medical technique of jabbing the patient with needles seems to concentrate entirely on physical treatment of disease but in fact it is based on beliefs about supernatural forces at work in the body

ACUPUNCTURE

ACUPUNCTURE is a system of healing which is centuries old in China, is still used there and taught in medical schools, and has been practised fairly extensively in the West since the 1930s. Needles are inserted into the skin, to a depth of about a tenth of an inch. They are left for a few minutes and then removed. 'To the casual observer', says Felix Mann, a leading Western authority on the subject, 'it could appear that what had been done was negligible and yet, in the right kind of case (whether severe or mild), the result can be such as to give the impression that the cure was effected by magic.'

The impression of magic comes partly from the fact that the needles are often inserted at points which have no apparent connection with the ailment that is being treated. A needle stuck into the little toe can cure headache, for biliousness a needle may be inserted into the patient's shoulder, and acupuncturists usually attack hay fever by treating the liver. There is no doubt that acupuncture is sometimes effective but no satisfactory scientific explanation of it has yet been produced.

Philosophically, acupuncture is based on theories about forces which are believed to govern everything in the universe, including human health. Medically, it is based on the fact that points on the body's surface become tender as a result of illness. If you have a headache, for instance, you may develop tender spots at the junction of the neck and the back of the head. When these spots are pressed, the pain is relieved.

The Chinese discovered about a thousand points on the skin where stimulation relieves or cures disease. These points are divided into 12 systems. All the points belonging to any one system are connected by an invisible line called a meridian, and each meridian is linked with one of the major organs of the body, including the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and bladder.

The meridian of the liver runs from near the liver to the inside of the leg and down to the big toe. The heart meridian runs from the heart down the inside of the arm to the little finger, which is roughly the track along which you feel pain if you have a heart attack.

Each of the points has its own name. The point on the spleen meridian called Tian Xi, Heavenly Ravine, is connected with bronchitis, rebellious cough, throat noises, peptic ulcer and other conditions. The point Yung Men, Cloud Gate, on the lung meridian may be treated to relieve shortness of breath, asthma, rheumatism and swelling of the neck, tonsillitis or acne.

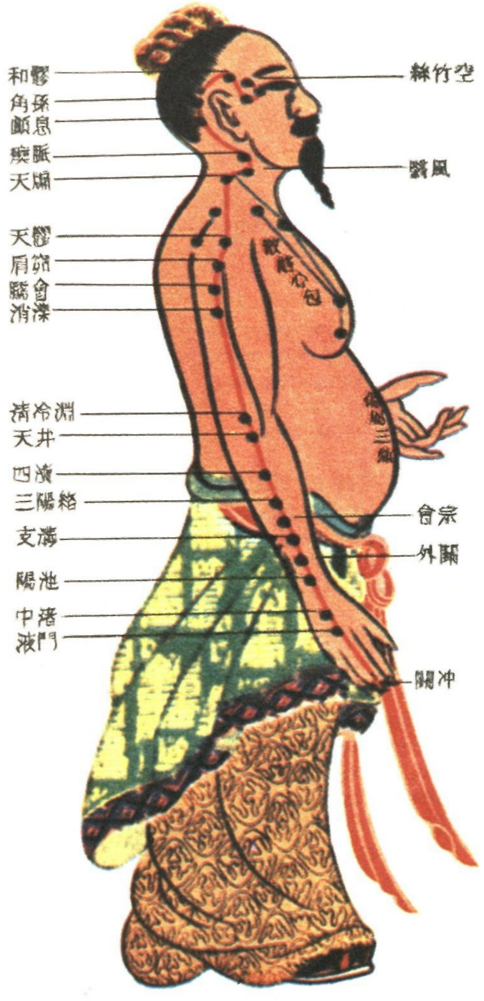
Some of the points correspond to the vital spots which are attacked in judo and karate. The two points on the neck at the base of the skull, which can be treated to cure headache and nosebleed, can also be struck to produce unconsciousness. Some points are related to those used in yoga. To promote efficient breathing on long walks, yogis may stimulate the point in the armpit which is on the lung meridian of acupuncture.

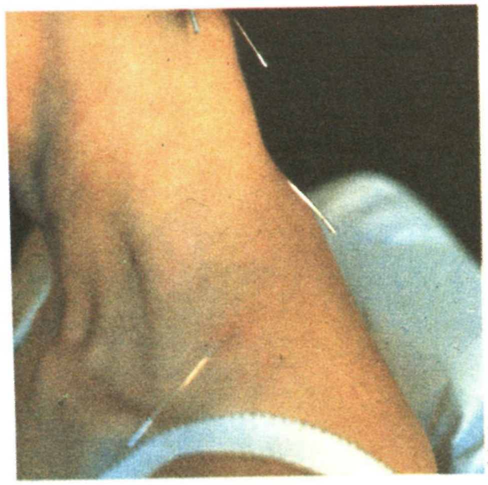
The Twelve Pulses

Acupuncture is concerned not only with healing but also with preventing disease. The Chinese attitude to medicine leans heavily towards keeping people in good health to begin with, rather than waiting for them to be ill and then trying to cure them: so much so that they produced a system which is the reverse of our own: Chinese patients paid the doctor as long as they stayed healthy and stopped paying him when they fell ill. When a disease first develops, before it takes hold and shows itself, there is a stage when the body's mechanism is slightly disturbed, but not enough for the patient to notice his symptoms. It is this type of condition which the acupuncturist tries to diagnose and halt.

Diagnosis is made by taking the pulse. The pulses at the left and right wrists are each divided into six sections, giving 12 pulses in all, corresponding to the 12 meridians. Each pulse may have any of 27 qualities, on which the doctor's diagnosis depends. The sensitivity required in taking the pulse is so fine that not only is the patient's present condition accurately determined but past illnesses described and future ones predicted.

In acupuncture needles are inserted into one or more of a thousand points on the skin, to relieve pain or cure disease. The points are divided into 12 systems and all the points in a system are connected by a line called a meridian *1* This chart shows some of the points and meridians. *2* and *3* Acupuncture has become popular in the West since the 1930s. A patient undergoing treatment, with needles placed in the neck and shoulders. *4* This box contains needles used by a modern Western acupuncturist

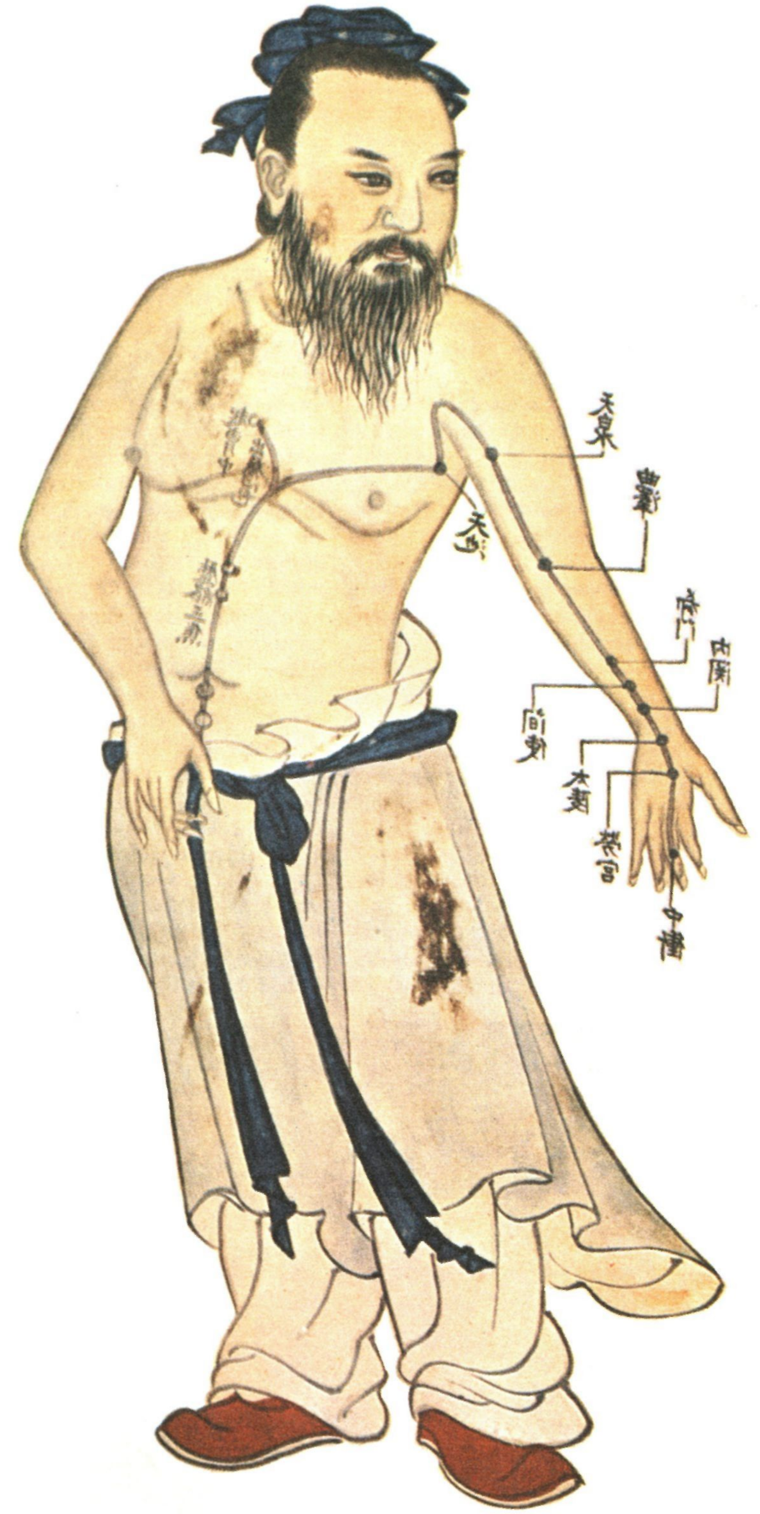




John Adams

John Adams

John Adams



Courtesy of Wellcome Trustees

The Flow of Qi

Acupuncture is extremely ancient and the oldest book on the subject, the *Nei Jing* or Book of the Yellow Emperor, dates from c 200 BC but contains material which is much older. It has been suggested that the system developed when people noticed that a warrior slightly wounded in battle by a blow from a stone or a sharp weapon, might be cured of some ailment by the wound.

Acupuncture depends on belief that in the healthy human body there is a continuous circulation of vital energy or 'life force'. This energy is called Qi (or Ch'I), which basically means 'air' or 'breath'. The identification of the life force with air, based on the simple observation that you cannot live without breathing, is found all over the world (see BREATH).

Qi circulates through the 12 meridians, starting from the lungs which draw breath, once every 24 hours. If it fails to flow properly, the organs of the body will suffer from a deficiency of energy or, where it is blocked, from a surplus of it. Acupuncture tries to bring the flow of life force back to normal by 'sedating' a meridian which has too much Qi or 'tonifying' a meridian which has too little.

If a meridian is 'empty', deficient in Qi, the previous meridian is tonified. Qi flows from the lungs through the large intestine, the stomach, the spleen and the heart to the liver. If the spleen is 'empty', the stomach meridian is tonified and the energy then flows on from it to the spleen. A secondary result is that because the stomach is now full of energy, the flow from the large intestine meridian is dammed back, so that there is an increase of energy in the large intestine.

Although taking the pulse is the main method of diagnosis in acupuncture, there are other signals which give the acupuncturist a clue to your physical condition. If you have a soft voice with a clear tone, this suggests that you have a satisfactory flow of Qi. A strong, rough voice suggests that you have too much flow of Qi, an excess of vital energy. A weak voice, lacking in resonance, suggests a weak and unstable flow of Qi. Similarly, a pure and unblemished skin with a rosy tint points to a healthy flow of Qi, a congested and reddish skin to too much Qi, a thick, fatty skin, greyish in colour, to too little.

Interplay of Yang and Yin

Qi is the product of two great forces, or principles or polarities, called Yang and Yin. These forces run through the whole universe and everything which exists depends on the interplay between them. 'Life', as Felix Mann puts it, 'exists as the result of tension between two extremes', and their different forms of combination with each other produce the five basic elements of which everything is made, the elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. If these are thought of in terms of electricity, Yang is the positive charge and Yin the negative: if in terms of sex, Yang is male and Yin is female. The sun, light, strength, the right side, fire, dryness and many other qualities belong to Yang. Their opposites, the moon, darkness, weakness, the left side, water and wetness belong to Yin.

The organs and meridians of the body are classified in terms of Yang and Yin. The heart, lungs, spleen, kidneys and liver belong to Yin, and a patient who has a weak heart will be said to be suffering from a deficiency of Yin. The intestines, stomach, bladder and gall bladder belong to Yang. Health and a satisfactory flow of Qi depend on a perfect balance between Yang and Yin in the body.

When the Yang and Yin energies in a man's body are reasonably in balance, he is healthy. If one becomes too strong or too weak, he is ill. If the Yang and Yin energies become separated altogether, he is dead. The acupuncturist stimulates the appropriate points on the skin with needles, either to restore the flow of the weakened energy or to restrict the flow of the stronger energy, and so bring the two energies back into balance. (For a similar idea in the West, see MAGNETISM.)

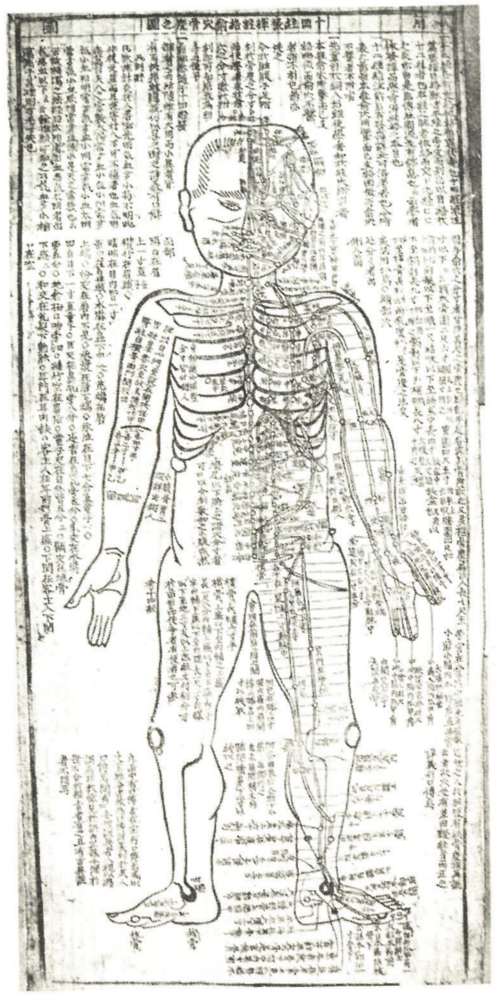
It is said that seasonal changes affect the flow of energy. The Yang is more active than the Yin in spring and summer: the reverse is the case in autumn and winter. The Yin energy is stronger than the Yang at the time of the new moon.

Opposites and Balance

The theory of Yang and Yin was systematized by a philosopher named Tsou Yen in the 4th century BC. But the belief that all things are made of opposites is not by any means confined to China.

Early Greek thinkers saw that the universe can be described in terms of opposites. Day gives way to night, summer to winter, heat to cold, youth to age. They also developed the theory that everything is made of four basic materials or elements, each combining two of the primary qualities, which are two pairs of opposites: hot and cold, dry and wet. The theory of the four elements and qualities was scarcely challenged until the 17th century. The idea that the world is made of opposites, with the consequent necessity for balancing and reconciling them harmoniously with each other, like Yang and Yin in the healthy body, was a basic doctrine of alchemy, also appears in astrology, and has remained one of the fundamental theories of occultism in the West (see OPPOSITES).

FURTHER READING: There are selections from the *Nei Jing* in I. Veith, *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, 1949). See also Felix Mann's excellent books, published by Heinemann, *Acupuncture: The Ancient Chinese Art of Healing* (1962), *The Meridians of Acupuncture* (1964), and *The Treatment of Disease by Acupuncture* (2nd edn, 1964). For a different approach, see D. & J. Lawson-Wood, *Chinese System of Healing* (Health Science Press, 1960).


Ronan Picture Library and E. P. Goldschmidt & Co. Ltd.

Far left **This figure shows the points believed to control diseases of the heart and the sexual organs**

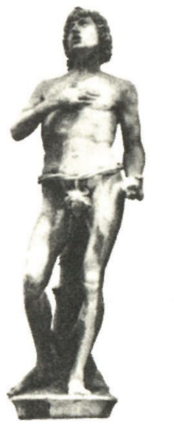
Right **Japanese chart, drawn in the 19th century, showing some of the points on the skin where acupuncturists insert needles to cure disease**

Medical Views

The Berkeley Acupuncture Clinics group is one of the largest organizations of its kind in Britain, with 30 clinics – one in almost every major city. A director of the Berkeley Clinics, Mr Michael Lee, says of acupuncture: 'It is not a faith healing thing, nor is it associated with witchcraft in any way – it is not even a psychosomatic treatment of disease. Acupuncture as a physical treatment for such ailments as arthritis, lumbago, rheumatism and migraine actually works – and we have thousands of satisfied patients who could testify to this.'

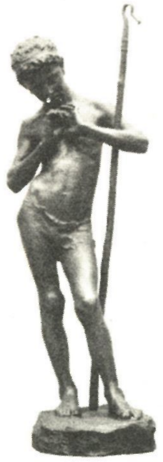
Generally speaking, modern acupuncturists follow the precepts laid down by their Chinese counterparts thousands of years ago, but make use of modern refinements. To find the appropriate 'meridians' on the surface of the skin, the Chinese worked by a highly-developed sense of touch, whereas the Berkeley Clinics, for instance, use an instrument known as an 'electro-diag' which registers the meridians on a dial. Mr Lee claims that his patients are statesmen, businessmen, teachers, lawyers, sportsmen – and doctors.

A spokesman for the British Medical Association said: 'Most medical practitioners nowadays prefer to use more modern methods of treatment. We neither approve nor disapprove of acupuncture.'


Mansell Collection

Adam

According to the book of Genesis, the first human being, created 'in the image' of God: the belief that man is a miniature copy of God has powerfully influenced European magic: Adam's disobedience in Eden was the 'original sin' and the belief that Christ was 'the second Adam', who came to free mankind from the consequences of Adam's crime, has been a major doctrine of Christianity.
See FIRST MAN.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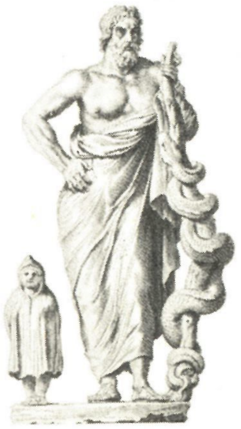
Adonis

In Greek mythology, a handsome youth, the lover of the goddess Aphrodite; he spent part of the year with her and part underground with the goddess of the underworld; associated with fertility and vegetation.
See APHRODITE; TAMMUZ.


Radio Times/Hulton

Aesculapius

Roman name of the Greek god Asclepios, whose province was healing; patients came to sleep at his shrines and were cured by healing dreams.
See HEALING GODS.

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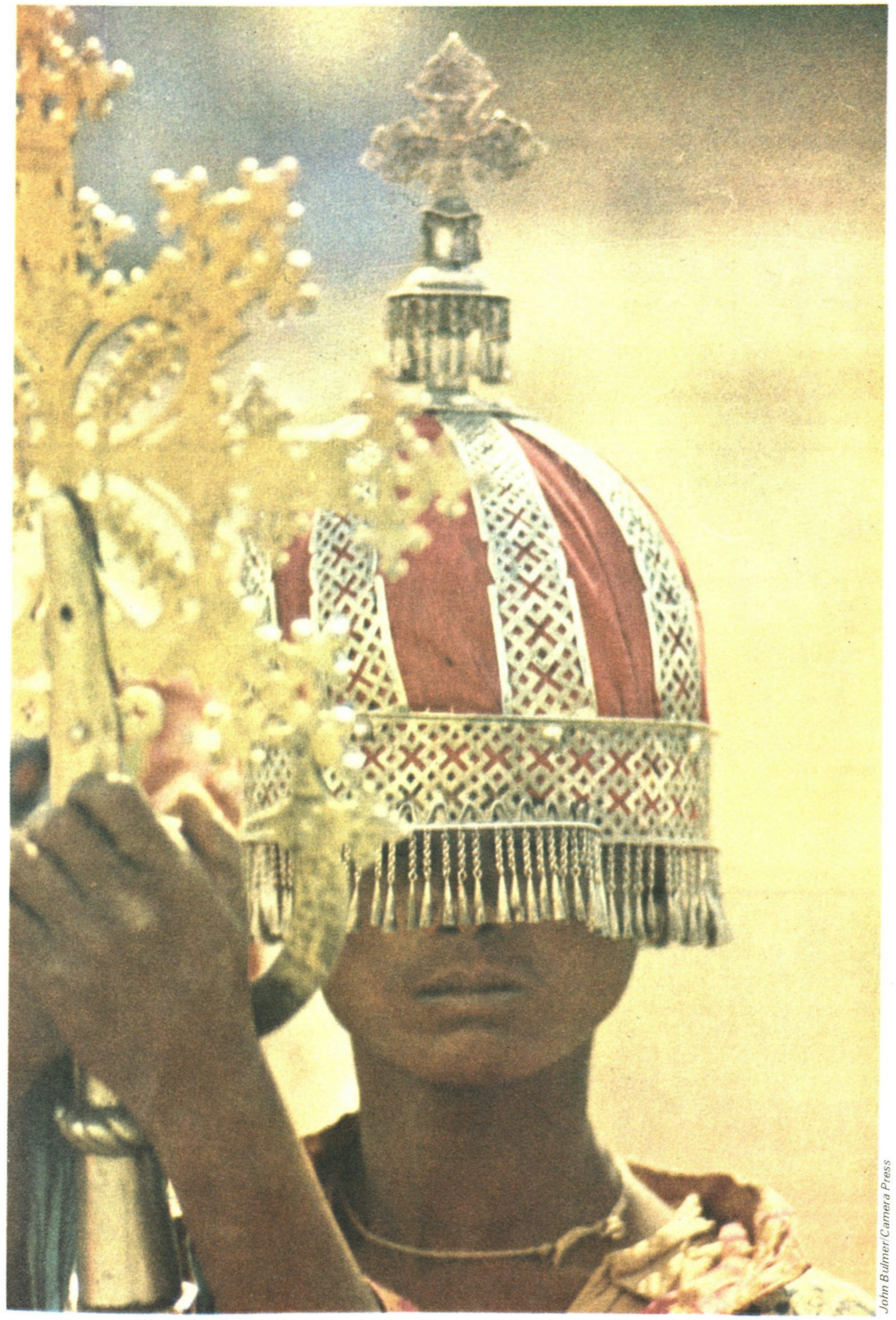
Aetherius Society

Aetherius Society

Modern group which believes itself to be in touch with spiritually advanced beings who live on Venus, Mars and Neptune; the society has 'charged' 19 mountains all over the world with spiritual force.
See FLYING SAUCERS.

AFRICA

'You are useless, you gods!'



John Bulmer/Camera Press

Africa is a continent of many gods – pagan, Mohammedan and Christian – of spirits, magic, witchcraft, and prophecy. This article gives the background for later entries dealing with individual tribes and customs

THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA contains some 6,000 different tribes. So complex are African languages, races, cultures and religions that anthropologists cannot yet agree about many of the facts that are available to them.

It follows that where there are so many sorts of men, there are many gods, or concepts of God, and many religious sects with their peculiar rites, magical practices and traditional myths. Some idea of the enormous diversity involved can be seen by comparing the Egyptian Copt, a tall, fair-skinned Christian, with the Bushman of southern Africa, a stunted, black-skinned pagan. Both are Africans, and both are typical in their way of African racial types, cultural groups and religious beliefs.

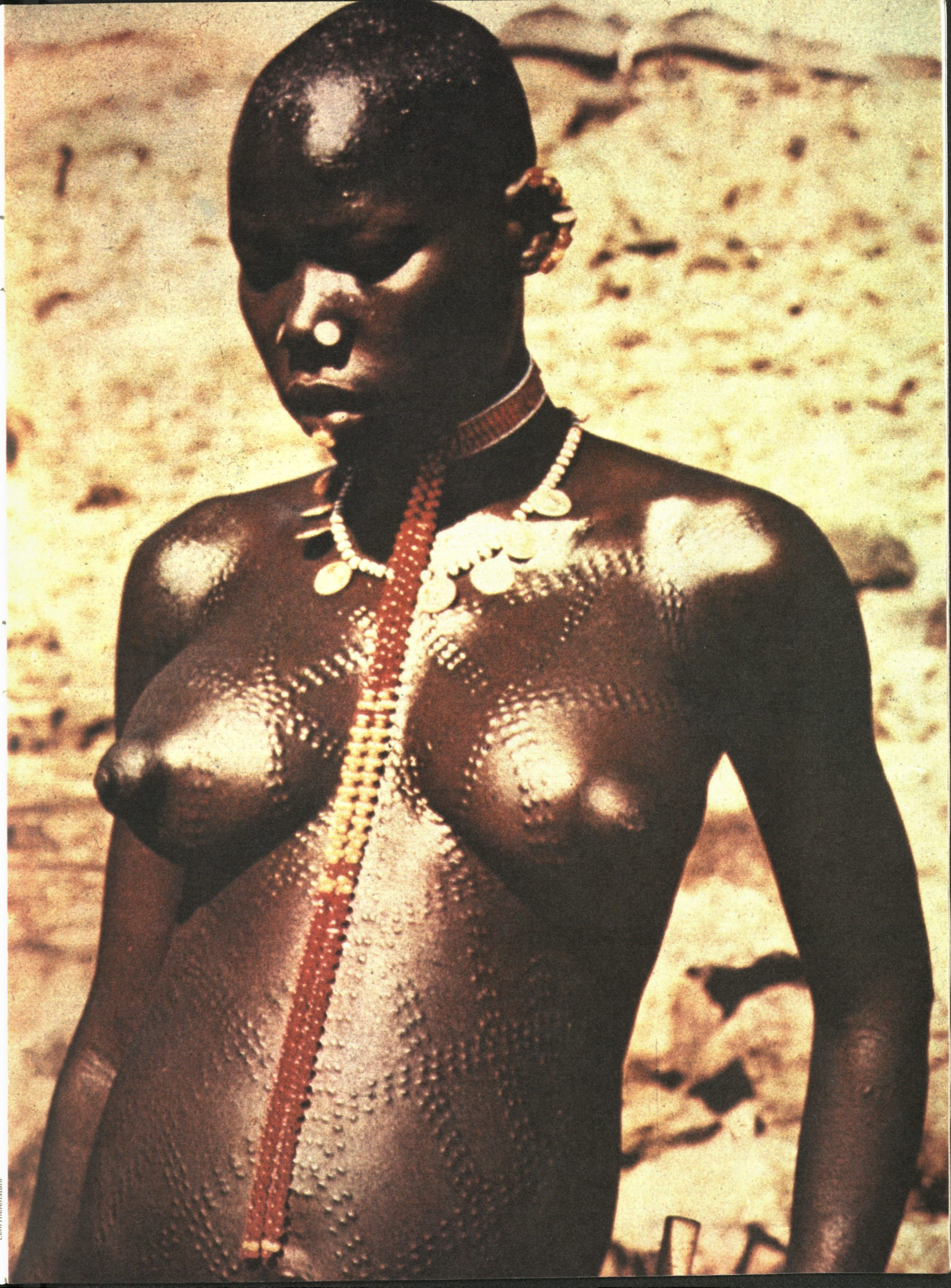
But there are certain basic concepts which underly all African religions; and these concepts, far from being the mumbo-jumbo popularly associated with medicine-men, witch-doctors, black magic, fetishes, ju-jus and the rest of it, are still a powerful spiritual and social force.

Paganism: Gods of Nature

To most Africans, God in one of his many manifestations, or called by one of his many names (there are over 200 principal epithets ranging from 'the Everlasting One of the Forest' to 'He who roars so loud that the nations are struck with terror') is an ever-present being; and his priests (medicine-men and witch-doctors) are recognized leaders of the tribal community.

Estimates give the number of non-Christians and non-Moslems in Africa as

Left Christian cross-bearer in procession, during the Queen's visit to the Sudan in 1965. There are over 68 million Christians in Africa
Right Cicatrization, cutting the skin with a sharp implement to produce raised scars, is practised by various African peoples, partly for beauty and partly for religious and magical purposes connected with initiation, pregnancy or love. This Nuba woman from the southern Sudan was first scarred when she was seven or eight



Leni Riefenstahl

Stephane Dinkins/Camera Press

Surrounded from birth by all the wonders and terrors of Nature, primitive man discovered objects of reverence and fear all around him

157,031,000, or over half of the total population. In earlier times, before the true character of African traditional beliefs was understood, these people were called simply 'heathens'. They were poor benighted savages who 'bowed down to wood and stone'. The more accurate term used today is 'pagans', from the Latin *paganus*, a word which originally meant a peasant or countryman.

The African pagan (like the pagan everywhere for that matter) believes in a polytheistic system in which a chief god presides over lesser deities, rather as a king ruled over his domain in ancient times. Nearly all African cults had their Supreme Being, called by a hundred different names which vary from tribe to tribe. But no matter what the chief god is called, he is invariably conceived of as the Maker of the World, the Master of Human Destiny, an omnipotent and omnipresent 'king of kings' and 'lord of lords'. And under the rule of the Supreme Being are all the lesser godlings, each with his special function.

The question that has puzzled observers since white men first arrived in Africa is whether this Supreme Being, whatever his name, is an abstract idea – a sort of creative energy which animates and pervades the universe, but has no direct relationship with man; or whether this god is a personal being, like the Jehovah of the Hebrews, or the 'Our Father' of the Christians. It is, perhaps, typical of the difficulties inherent in a study of African religion that no native has come forward to clarify the question; and that white men can only make their observations from the outside, with no help at all from written scriptures, texts or recorded ecclesiastical history.

Yet all observers who have managed to make contact with pagan Africans agree that the idea of a Supreme Being, though vague, is universal, even among the most primitive of peoples, like the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. It is also clear that the worship of this Supreme Being is, on the whole, a lackadaisical affair. The Creator of the Universe is, after all, bound to be somewhat indifferent to a mere human and his problems.

On the other hand, the lesser gods – the spirits of the earth and the ghosts of departed heroes – are thought to be much more sympathetic.

They can be flattered, wheedled and even threatened. A not unusual African prayer will go as follows: 'You are useless, you gods! You give us only trouble! You are a bunch of so-and-so's! What do we get from you? Nothing!'

It is evident that this 'personalized' relationship with the deity is not confined to African pagans. Christians, in particular Roman Catholics, often approach God through such intermediaries as the Virgin, the Apostles, local saints, martyrs, and others. And in the Moslem religion, Mohammed and his fellow prophets (including Jesus Christ) are the buffers, as it were, between humble man and Almighty God.

The African, surrounded from birth by all the wonders and terrors of nature, logically pays more heed to sun, rain, storms, rivers and animals than we do, as these objects are his immediate friends or enemies. From the dawn of time primitive man discovered objects of reverence and fear all around him. The former had to be thanked; the latter placated. This was the origin of all religious activity and remains the cardinal principle of African paganism. And if we remember that, in the beginning, men noticed that their enemies – crocodiles, snakes, lions and the like – were quiescent once they had caught and devoured their prey, we can begin to understand the origin of human sacrifice. Such sacrifices were common throughout the continent of Africa until quite recently, and nobody knows the extent to which they are still practised today.

Nature worship, then, is perhaps the most significant aspect of African paganism, and it is found in a hundred different forms throughout the continent. We are familiar with it in the animal gods of ancient Egypt; and among those gods, the crocodile and serpent were accorded special veneration. They still are in parts of Africa. It is difficult for Western man, with his inbuilt horror of snakes, to understand the African's attitude; yet our obsessions about reptiles are perhaps more illogical and less 'scientific' than primitive man's regard for these lowly creatures. After all, there are more beneficent serpents than maleficent, and we often kill our friends in our ignorance.

The African is more cautious in his approach; and instead of indiscriminately killing all snakes, whether poisonous or not, he tries to placate the 'snake spirit' itself. Python worship, for instance, is characteristic of several West and East African tribes.

Less than a hundred years ago, travellers described the python 'temples' where these snakes were fed, watered, venerated and even danced to. The python god was given many wives who brought food and water to him and made him comfortable with grass mats and a decorated house. In return, his spirit watched over the tribe and, in the person of the priest, forewarned the community of dangers, accidents and the like. The penalty for killing a python was death by burning, and in 1864 the explorer Sir Richard Burton saw a python-killer burnt alive in his hut, from which he escaped only to be clubbed to death by priests.

Another fundamental fact of African paganism is the firm belief in life after death. No one dies from natural causes in any case. He ceases to live because he has been 'interfered' with – perhaps by human enemies, perhaps by evil spirits. Hence, when he 'passes over', this does not mean that he has gone for good but, to the contrary, he continues to take part in the communal life, now in his spirit form.

Africans, however, do not 'worship' these spirits so much as consult them or ask them for favours, or even argue with them. The ghosts themselves are present in some peculiarly personal belonging or frequented place – their hut, or the log they sat on at council meetings, or the tree they rested beneath. The well-known 'stool huts' of the Ghanaian kings are explained in these terms. The stools symbolize the 'soul' or personality of the departed kings and are preserved for many generations. Moreover, whereas our ideas of personal life after death are often comparatively vague, the African has a firm belief in reincarnation,

Leni Riefenstahl

Above left These figures stand outside a shrine of the god of thunder in western Nigeria
Above Typically arid landscape in the Sudan. The African's reliance on Nature for water, food and all the necessities of life is the basis of Nature worship, the most significant aspect of African paganism, found in many different forms all over the continent

The Magician Must Surely Die

Fundikira, the chief of Unyamwezi . . . fell ill in the autumn of 1858, and, as usual, his relations were suspected of compassing his end by Uchawi, or black magic. In these regions the death of one man causes many. The Mganga (witch doctor) was summoned to apply the usual ordeal. After administering a mystic drug, he broke the neck of a fowl, and splitting it into two lengths inspected the interior. If blackness or blemish appear about the wings, it denotes the treachery of children, relations and kinsmen; the backbone convicts the mother and grandmother; the tail shows that the criminal is the wife, the thighs the concubines, and the injured shanks or feet, the other slaves. Having fixed upon the class of the criminals, they are collected together by the Mganga, who, after similarly dosing a second hen, throws her up into the air above the heads of the crowd and singles out the person upon whom she alights. Confession is extorted by tying the thumb backwards till it touches the wrist or by some equally barbarous mode of question. The consequence of condemnation is certain and immediate death; the mode is chosen by the Mganga. Some are speared, others are beheaded or 'ammazati' – clubbed: – a common way is to bind the cranium between two stiff pieces of wood which are gradually tightened by cords until the brain bursts out from the sutures. For women they practise a peculiarly horrible kind of impalement. These atrocities continue until the chief recovers or dies: at the commencement of his attack, in one household eighteen souls, male and female, had been destroyed; should his illness be protracted, scores will precede him to the grave, for the Mchawi or magician must surely die.

Sir Richard Burton
The Lake Regions of Central Africa

Leni Riefenstahl

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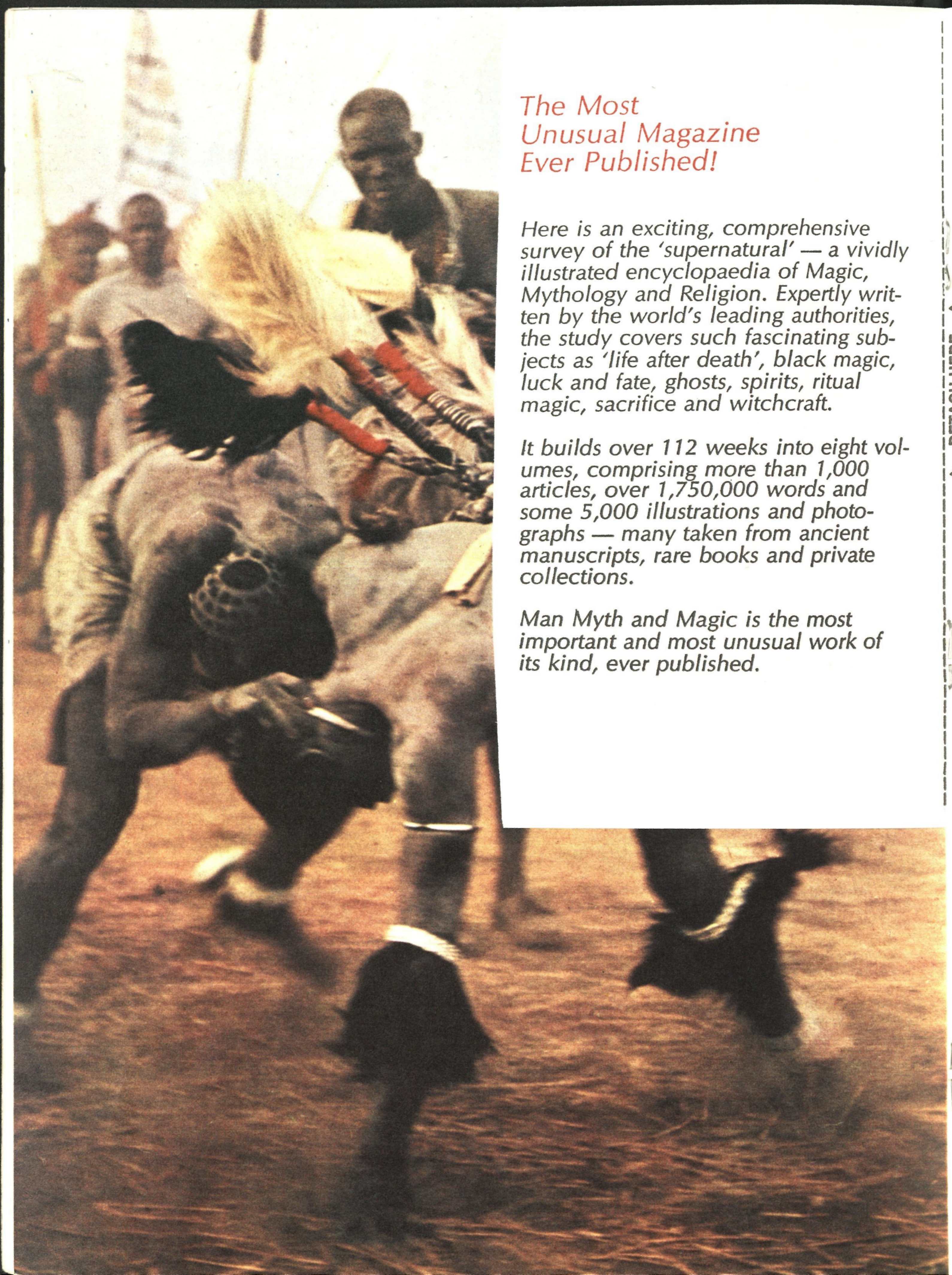
One of the objectives of these conquistadores was, in their own words, 'the exaltation of the Catholic faith', and priests invariably accompanied the armies and navies of the invaders. They had considerable success in terms of numbers, for we hear that one Jesuit priest on a short tour through the Congo in 1531 baptized 1,500



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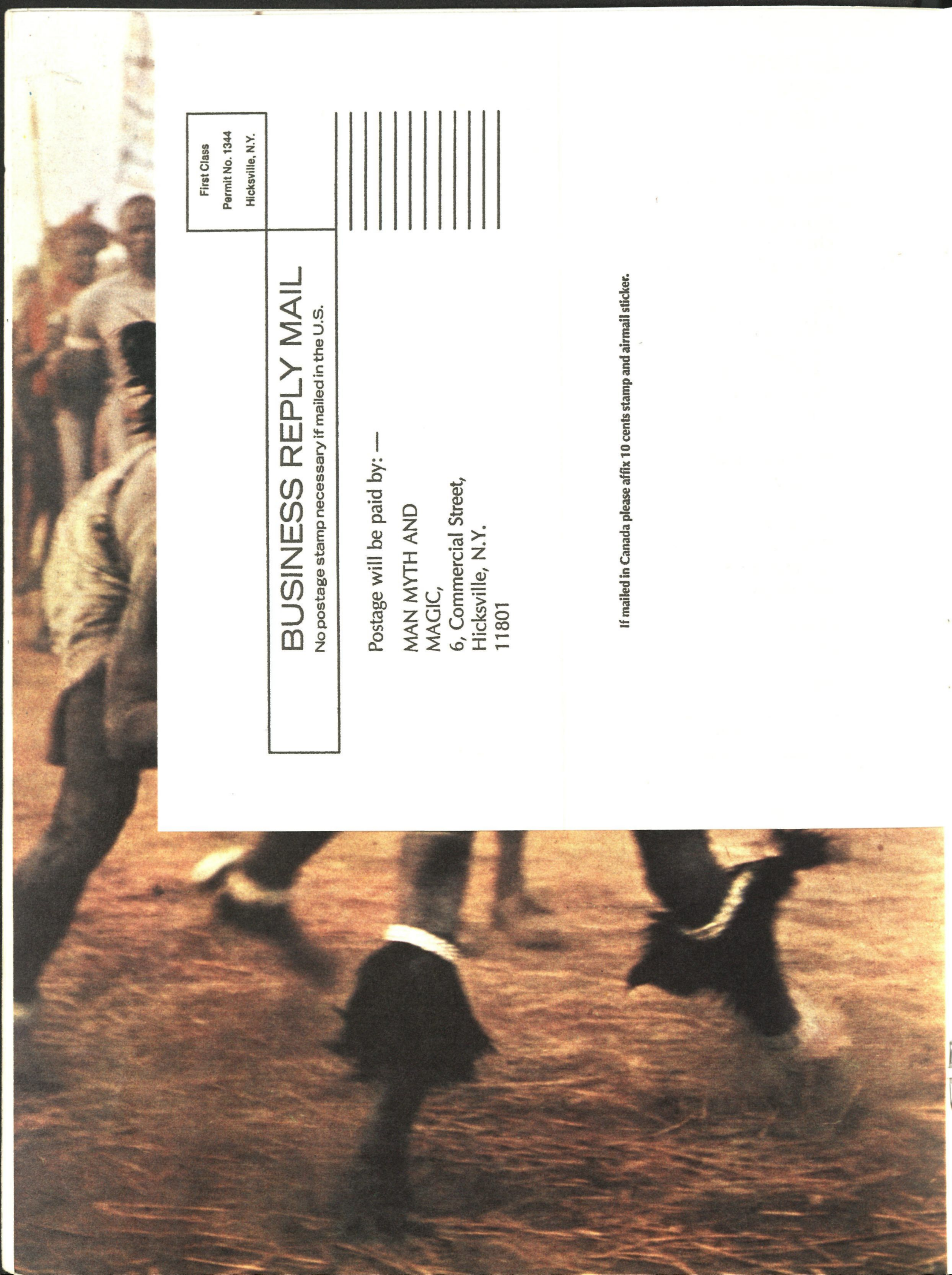

Nuba wrestlers cover themselves with ashes, partly to reduce slipperiness but also because they believe that the ashes give them extra vigour. The belief that ashes, like fire which created them, carry new life and strength is widespread all over the world

Leni Riefenstahl

Black men were puzzled by assurances that they were children of God on the one hand -and slaves of white men on the other

a belief no doubt founded on the physical resemblance of a child to his parents and grandparents. Eventually one of the ancestors returns from the spirit world to enter the body of a newly-born child.

Summarizing the main tenets of African paganism, we can conclude that there is an underlying concept of a Supreme Being who made the world and presides over the destiny of mankind; that this world is full of spirits enshrined in natural phenomena and dead ancestors; and that there is no final 'death', but an active after-life together with an eventual return to earth in a reincarnated body.

Islam: Religion of the Desert

Moslems make up the second largest religious group in Africa, estimated at 97,934,000, the majority in North Africa which is almost wholly Mohammedan.

The Arabs began their conquest of Africa in the 7th century and had wiped out almost all traces of Christianity within a hundred years. Only the Coptic Church of Egypt and Ethiopia survived – small communities of Christians who were to be cut off from their brethren in the outside world for almost ten centuries.

There is no denying the immense appeal of Islam to the nomadic people who inhabit the lonely wastelands of the Sahara – 3,000,000 square miles of mountain ranges and sand seas. Islam originated in the desert among desert people, and its prophet Mohammed conceived its spiritual and moral code in terms of desert needs. It is an eminently practical religion, well-suited to the actual conditions obtaining in Africa, where polygamy, for instance, is recognized by all unprejudiced observers as a necessary institution. By way of contrast, Christianity, with its emphasis on original sin and sexual inhibitions, is comparatively unsuited to the African temperament and life.

Once North Africa had been conquered by their armies, Arab traders and merchants began their penetration of regions which even the Carthaginians and Romans had not explored. These traders were primarily after loot in the form of ivory, gold and, above all, slaves. And wherever they went, the Arab traders took with them the new religion, an absolutely uncompromising faith and fervour which left subject peoples no alternative: one was either a believer or an infidel. And this often meant, in practical terms, a choice of life or death.

Millions of pagan Africans all over the continent chose to 'co-operate' with the fierce and well-armed invaders, as they were to 'co-operate' with the Portuguese Christians during the 17th and 18th centuries. At the same time, the Moslem concept of the One God was, as we have seen, not alien to African thinking.

Moreover, Koranic law (as opposed to Christian morality) did not basically conflict with tribal custom. It recognized the institution of slavery, for instance – an institution which was actually an economic necessity in non-industrial, non-mechanized societies. But Islam controlled and to some extent softened the cruel system by introducing laws regulating the treatment of slaves, concubinage, the status of the resulting children, and the rights of slaves as human beings, particularly if they chose to be converts to the true religion.

The bulk of the Negro population who suffered from the cruelty of kings and chieftains must have welcomed the new laws. Before the arrival of the Arabs, the best that a Negro captured by a rival tribe could expect was a lifetime of intolerable serfdom or, if he was a young man, castration. The more likely fate was to have a leg chopped off and to be left to die. A number of European travellers in central Africa scarcely a hundred years ago give eyewitness accounts of this treatment of prisoners taken in tribal wars. The Arab traders, with an eye to the Mediterranean markets, considered this practice a waste of manpower; and wherever they converted people to their faith, they introduced a more humane relationship between master and slave.

In addition, the Arabs being themselves a non-industrialized people did not upset the simple economy of Negro life by introducing the machines and paraphernalia of western civilization. But they did bring many needed arts and crafts which enabled the primitive tribes slowly to improve their standard of living.

The results are obvious throughout Moslem Africa. Islam is a living force with strong political overtones. Once converted to the Mohammedan faith, the African can seldom be converted to Christianity, and most missionaries now openly admit that it is a waste of time to try to proselytize in Islamic countries like Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Mauretania. Wherever Islam has had a few centuries to take root, it gives the impression of being wholly integrated into the spiritual, social and political life of its African converts.

White Faith in a Dark World

From about AD 100 to AD 600 the Christian Church in Africa was one of the great bulwarks of the faith, a church with millions of adherents, hundreds of bishops, and an imposing list of martyrs and leaders. This powerful organization covered the whole of northern Africa from the mountains of Ethiopia to the shores of the Atlantic. Yet it was wiped out almost overnight (except for the Copts) by the conquest of the Arabs from the 7th century onwards. Christianity was unable to obtain a new foothold on the African continent for the next thousand years.

Today, the Christian Church claims a total of 68,208,509 members, of whom 29,100,000 are Roman Catholics, 17,500,000 belong to the Coptic and Eastern Churches, and 21,608,509 are Protestants. The handbooks that provide these statistics warn that they should be accepted with caution, since it is almost impossible to take an exact census in many parts of Africa.

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Gianni Roghi/Camera Press

Prediction and magic both depend on the belief that things do not happen by accident. The pattern of the crab's movements in the bowl provides an omen of the future

Negroes, using a hose for the purpose. A number of native kings were also persuaded to divorce all their hundreds of wives save one, no doubt with disastrous results to the tribal organization.

But unfortunately for the success of the missionaries, the European slave-traders were simultaneously busy exporting millions of Africans overseas to the New World – an estimated 100,000,000 having been shipped out as slaves between 1441, when the trade began with the arrival of the Portuguese, until 1888 when it officially ended. The black men were not unnaturally puzzled by the assurances on the part of the missionaries that they were children of God on the one hand and slaves of white men on the other. The problem was summed up by a Jesuit priest who worked in the Congo from 1881 to 1887. 'The Negro saw, and compared with his rude intelligence, the teaching and the works', he writes. 'They did not coincide. While the Christian missionary proclaimed the lofty dignity of the child of God by grace, the Christian trader merely counted one more "piece" for his gang.'

However, brave and truly Christian men like Livingstone continued with their work, and they have been followed by thousands of evangelists who have penetrated into every corner of Africa within the last hundred years. Today, through churches, chapels, mission schools and hospitals, the African is in daily contact with Christianity in its more practical form.

Spiritually, Africans tend to adapt Christian doctrine and ritual to their own temperament and way of life. The same process is noticeable in other parts of the world where Negroes meet in Christian worship. Services are more lively, and to some critics smack of far more ancient rites than the Christian ones. Song, dance and religious ecstasy remind us of pagan Africa, showing how deep-seated is the old traditional religion of the forest.

It is not surprising, therefore, that a considerable number of African Christians have broken away from the orthodox European sects to establish churches of their own. At the latest count there are an estimated 4,594 separate sects with a membership of 7,000,000 scattered over 33 states. Perhaps nothing could show more forcefully how deep-rooted the ancient tribal beliefs are than these breakaway churches, for we see in their organization and ritual definite pagan elements – like 'prophets' and 'prophetesses' (medicine-men and witch-doctors), 'healings' (white magic), dreams and visions (divination) and so on.

Further, these African churches are strongly asserting their 'Africanism' as against the European missionaries' 'white' view of the world. The names of some of these new sects clearly indicate their independence from the Western churches.

Thus we have 'the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth and its leader the Prophet Simon Kimbangu' in the Congo; the 'Church of the Cherubim and Seraphim' and the 'Church of the Lord Aladura' in Nigeria; and the 'Christian Marching Church of Central Africa' which is centred in Rhodesia.

Judging from the ritual of these breakaway sects, Christianity in central and southern Africa will soon have little resemblance to established religion as we know it in the West.

Medicine-Men and Witch-Doctors

These religious officials, who are found throughout pagan Africa, have always been popularly presented in the West as bogymen dressed up in absurd masks, feathers and animal skins, who leap about to the accompaniment of drums. They are alleged to deal in pure mumbo-jumbo in order to hoodwink the superstitious savages who are under their spell.

The facts are that these priests fulfil a useful function in all primitive communities. It is true that their skills, methods, medicines and cures do not conform with modern science. But this is not the fault of the medicine-men. Until European doctors arrived on the scene, the Africans had no alternative but to put their trust in those members of their tribe who had some understanding and some control of the physical and mental ills that afflicted the community. In other words, where malign spirits seemed to play so great a part in men's lives, specialists were needed to study cause and effect; and over the centuries there emerged a class of men who appeared to have some skill and some success in the prevention and cure of sickness. This was the origin and the role of the medicine-man.

In some cases, the medicine-man has developed effective cures based on his knowledge of drugs derived from plants. From centuries of experiment and observation, he has developed a pharmacopoeia for such day-to-day needs as inducing vomiting in the case of poison; purgatives for ridding children of worms; sedatives for quietening hysterics; and potions for chest colds, headaches, whooping-cough, dysentery, snake bite, swellings and stings. If his remedies were all totally ineffective, the medicine-man would quickly lose his standing in the community, as a doctor would in ours.

It must be admitted, however, that the medicine-man also relies for his cures on his special brand of hocus-pocus, as an examination of his 'little black bag' would reveal – a fantastic collection of trivia – bits of bone, wooden figures, lumps of old iron, shells, beads, feathers. A great deal of the medicine-man's treatment is psychological and belongs to the sphere of faith healing. Some Western observers of his methods, particularly in the case of neurotics, go so far as to say that he has as much success as our psychiatrists, if not more.

All European observers agree that the African's obsession with witches is the most evil aspect of paganism. Yet the witch-doctor, like the medicine-man, is not at all the ogre of popular imagination. He flourishes in primitive societies because of the belief that both the spirit and the human world are peopled by two opposing forces – the good and the evil. The witch-doctor is on the side of the good, and his chief job is to protect the community from evil spirits and wicked men.

He must always be ready to cope with mysterious events and diseases, like the death of a chieftain, sudden fevers, barrenness in women, sterility in men, mental disturbances and all other calamities believed to be caused by witches. In such cases his standard practice is to 'smell out' the evil-doer by the ancient and barbarous method of 'trial by ordeal'. This usually consists of administering poison either to the suspects or to their animals, the degree of the resultant sickness being considered infallible evidence of guilt. To make sure there is no mistake, a confession is extorted from the accused by torture. The punishment for witches is death.

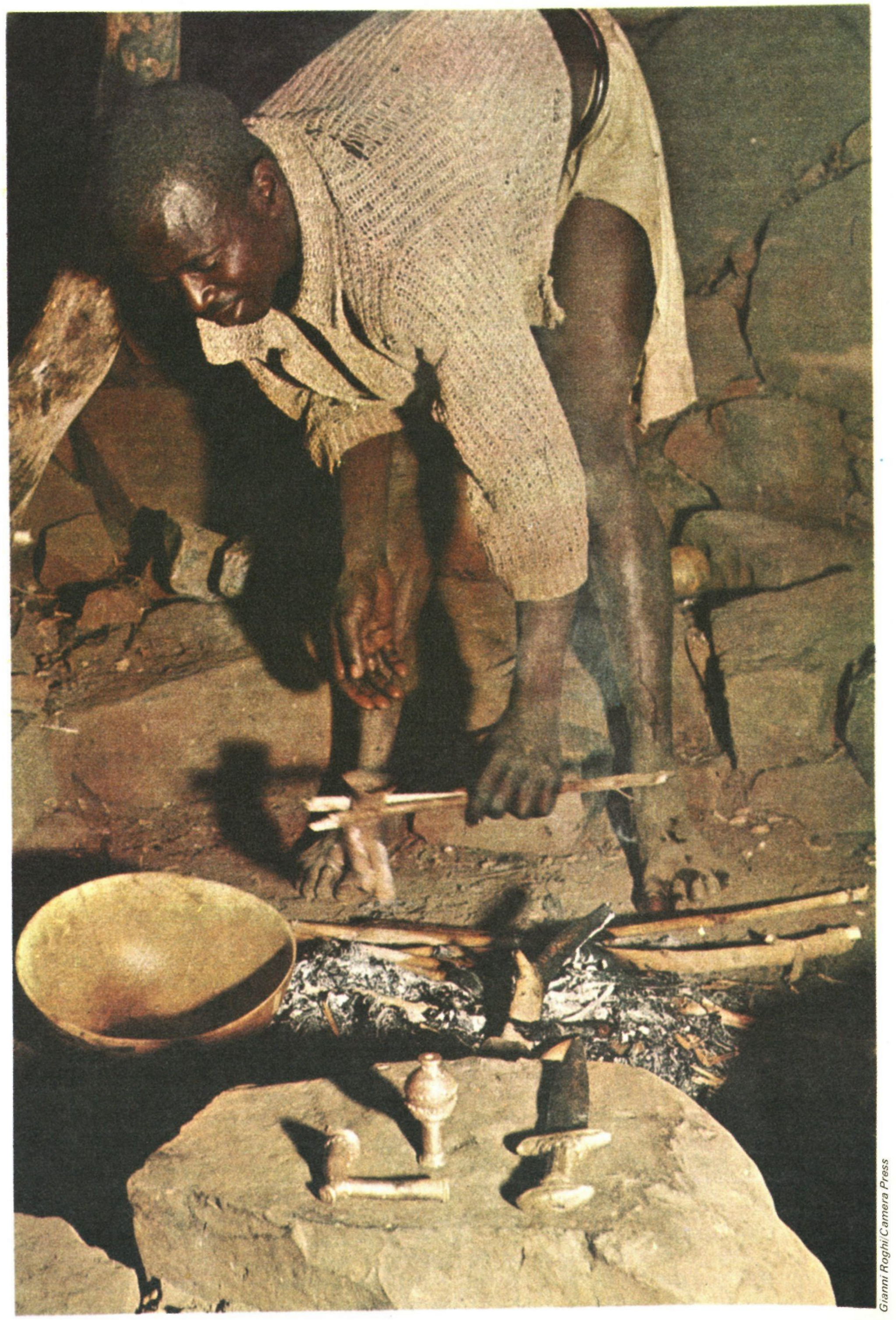
Medicine-men and witch-doctors are not the bogymen and ogres of popular imagination

Less barbarous is the witch-doctor's method of predicting the future. For this purpose he has a basket crammed with odds and ends which he shakes about, selecting the topmost object and interpreting the omens from it. A white bone means happiness and laughter in the village. A piece of iron means death. A wooden figure with a black tuft on its head means the appearance of a European who will cause misfortune. For this ju-ju, the witch-doctor speaks in a falsetto voice in mimicry of a European.

The Rain-Maker

Another important function of the witch-doctor is rain-making, which is a wholly religious activity with the Africans as it is a wholly scientific process with us. Agriculture, the harvest, and hence life itself depend upon rainfall. If the rain does not come, the god must be placated by every means in the witch-doctor's power, and elaborate ceremonies are common throughout central Africa for this purpose. They usually follow a general pattern of singing, dancing and praying with the rain-maker working himself into a state of ecstasy in order to invoke the god. If his efforts are successful, he will become a great hero. If they are not, he may be accused of being a witch masquerading as a witch-doctor, for here again, to the primitive African, calamities like drought are always ascribed to black magic. It can easily be seen that the career of rain-maker is a dangerous one; but it is undertaken by the witch-doctor as a *religious* duty, even when he knows that all he can really do to end a drought is to beg the god to send the rain. African rain-making ceremonies, insofar as they depend upon mystical rites, are not radically different from those found in drought-stricken Christian countries. The liquefaction of the blood of St Januarius at Naples, supposed to be an omen of good rains and a bountiful harvest, is an example.

We see, then, that the witch-doctor, cruel or ridiculous though his methods may



Gianni Roghi/Camera Press

In Africa, as in many other parts of the world, the craft of the smith, the controller of fire, is associated with religion and magic. Other members of the tribe are not allowed to see the tools of this smith in Cameroon, West Africa, who is also a priest

Rhythmic drumming and dancing is used to induce states of trance in which spirits take possession of the performers, making a channel of communication between the normal and supernatural worlds

Left African drummer in trance

Right Two Bushman women at a dance to cast out evil spirits

Far right Samburu women in Kenya, dancing to induce trance

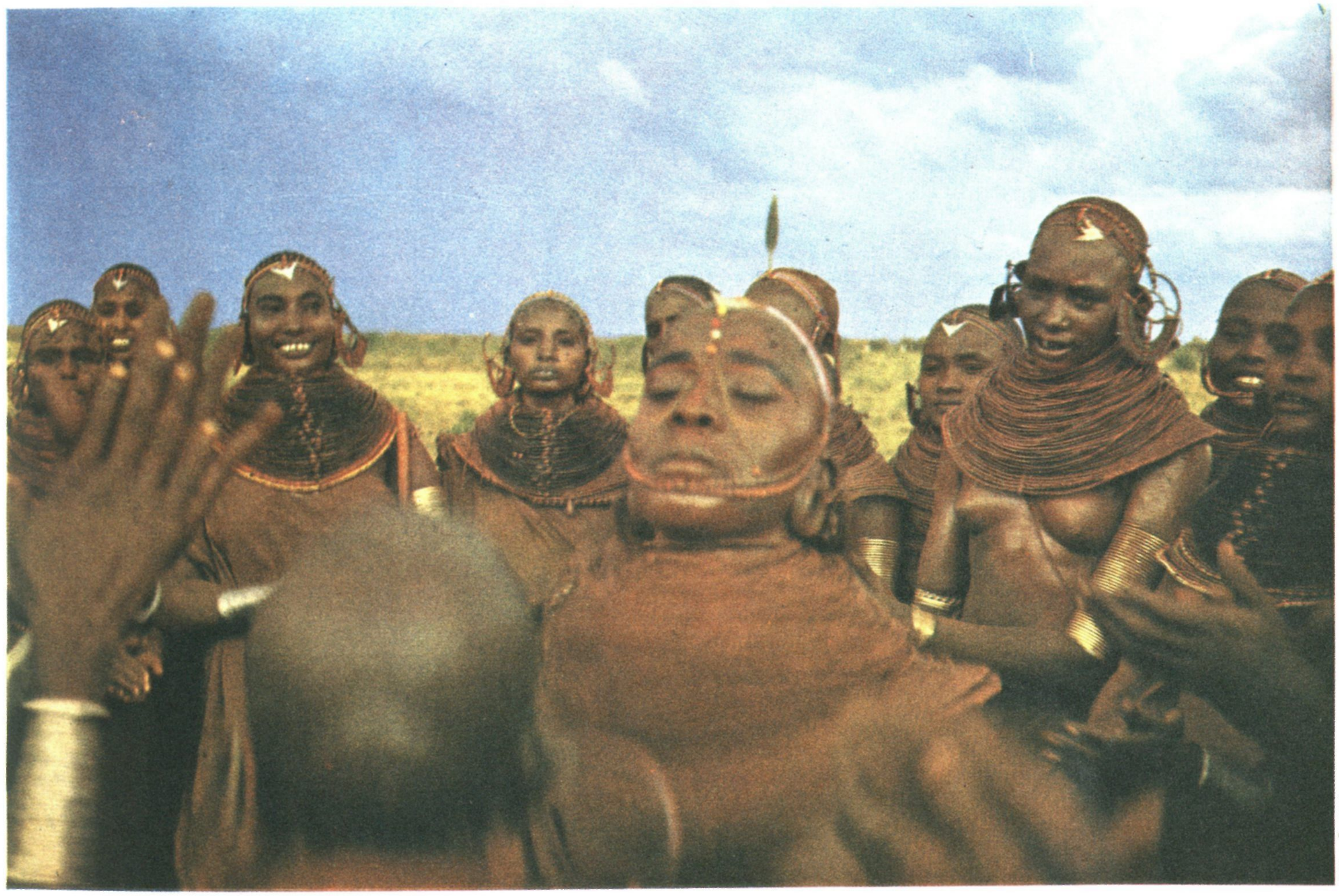
Death, Guilt and Sex
The Zulu in the 19th century:

One superstition had a decided effect on military activity. A warrior who killed an opponent stood to develop a serious ailment, culminating in madness, unless he took immediate preventive action. The first step in the cleansing process was to rip open the fallen foe's abdomen with a single slash of the assegai, in order to allow his spirit to escape. The victorious warrior then had to eat and sleep apart from the other men until his cleansing was completed. This involved travel to his home kraal, but before resuming relations with his wives he had to have intercourse with a woman not of his own kraal; this transferred the disease to her in latent form, and she in turn would pass it on to the next man to have intercourse with her. If no woman was available, the warrior could resort to sodomy. The superstition led to short campaigns, since after every battle most of the victorious army at once decamped for home.

Donald R. Morris *The Washing of the Spears*

Jurgen Schadeberg

Jurgen Schadeberg


William Sargant

At the death of an Ashanti queen in 1816 more than 3,500 slaves were murdered in her honour...

seem to us, is attempting in his way to serve the community by upholding the good and by waging war on evil.

Rites: Temples, Altars, Sacrifices

Primitive Africans, not knowing how to build in stone, seldom erect formal temples to their gods. As worshippers of nature, they prefer natural shrines, and the 'sacred grove' is universally venerated as the abode of spirits. A typical sacred grove may contain a pool, serpents, a phallic-shaped stone, or a hut which houses clay figures representing tribal gods and ancestors. To these shrines the worshippers bring their offerings of eggs, cowrie shells, little scraps of cloth and even empty bottles. The idea of the sacred grove is, of course, one of the most ancient and fundamental elements of all primitive religion.

There are many curious customs connected with pregnancy and childbirth among the African tribes, since primitive peoples have never understood the physiological processes involved. The phenomenon of birth is, therefore, a mystical event, surrounded by special rites and taboos.

For instance, we find in central Africa the taboo about seeing a pregnant woman up a tree. In such a case, a man is expected to shoot the unfortunate woman. Elsewhere it is taboo for a pregnant woman to sit on a rock, since this will prolong her labour.

Many women bear their children while working in the fields. Difficult deliveries are abnormal, though European doctors report that Negro women bleed worse the nearer their diet comes to that of the white man. On the occasion of their delivery, African women have no desire for the presence of their husband, since 'the child will be ashamed to be born' if a man is present.

When a girl baby is born, the umbilical cord is cut by a hoe to ensure that the female will be a good field worker. The cord of a boy is cut with an arrow to make him a good hunter.

Marriage is a social contract, without any particular religious associations. Prospective husbands are usually more interested in a woman's fertility than in her virginity, since the African's attitudes towards sex are relatively simple and he has few of the obsessions or inhibitions of civilized men in this respect.

The African does not make the sharp distinction between life and death that we do. Death is merely another change in status. The deceased is not 'dead' in our sense. He remains a very real presence in the community, continuing to benefit the living by his wisdom and advice.

His soul returns to that reservoir of power which we have called the Supreme Being. His body passes as a ghost to that 'other world' which is common to all African pagan religions. He must, therefore, be provided for in death as in life. Hence he is buried with solemn rites and interred with the necessities of existence – food, clothes, cooking pots and, in the case of the kings and chiefs in olden days, with wives and slaves who were sacrificed for the occasion.

It is reliably recorded that at the death of an Ashanti queen in 1816 more than 3,500 slaves were murdered in her honour. Cases of human sacrifice on the occasion of a king's death are no longer known in Africa today.

Initiation Ceremonies

The purpose of initiation customs, most of which are extremely severe, is to promote unity, co-operation and conformity to the life and law of the tribe. The most typical of them, and one that is almost universal throughout Africa, is circumcision. Nearly all African boys and large numbers of the girls undergo this mutilation, which is regarded as more of a religious ordeal than a surgical operation. The incidence of death as a result of clumsy methods, dirty knives and post-operative severity is considered as evidence of the religious nature of the rite.

The initiation is directed by the village elders and administered by the medicine-man. The boys, aged between 10 and 17, are sent away from the village into a special camp, which they are not allowed to leave for as long as six months. During that time they are considered to be on probation. In fact, they are treated much as young criminals were treated in the bad old days in European prisons, half-starved, whipped for the most trifling offences, crowded into pens, and not allowed to wash until the long

Sudden death from sheer terror is not unknown...where a man discovers an evil fetish in his house

John Bulmer/Camera Press

Left Animals have been important in the African approach to the supernatural since the animal gods of ancient Egypt. An ant-eater and an elephant appear on these ceremonial staffs held by the orators or spokesmen of native chiefs in Ghana
Right Young masked girls in Basutoland taking part in pagan initiation ceremonies. These ordeals are sometimes so severe that they cause serious injury or death

Eli Weinberg/Camera Press

ordeal is terminated. These boys, once circumcised, swear blood brotherhood with each other. Those who survive the initiation emerge as full adult members of the tribe, with all the rights and privileges of the elders, including the right to marry.

A number of tribes also practise a similar rite on girls, who are taken to a 'camp' where they undergo clitoridectomy as proof, if they survive, that they are adults and entitled to begin new lives as wives and mothers.

Secret Societies

For the African, membership in a secret society begins at the very outset of his initiation into the tribe with the long circumcision ordeal shared with his companions. From the moment he returns from the camp to his village, the young Negro is involved in secret activities of one kind or another for the remainder of his life.

The principal secret societies seem to be directly related to pagan beliefs in spirits, witchcraft and cannibalism. Typical are the West African Leopard Societies whose members are supposed to transform themselves into the most feared animal of the forest. And like the leopard, they claw their victims to death and devour parts of them. European administrators made many attempts to root out 'leopard men', usually unsuccessfully.

Probably the most widespread and socially accepted secret organizations are those of self-appointed vigilantes engaged in the perpetual war against witches. Nigeria is the home of a secret witch-hunting society which has a curious resemblance to the Ku-Klux-Klan of the United States. The witch-hunters wear tall conical head-cloths to mask their human features and descend on villages at night to root out suspected witches.

Governments in Africa do not approve of secret societies but are powerless to suppress them. They are, on the one hand, an integral part of social life; and on the other, a powerful political force. The importance of such secret societies throughout Africa is typified in the Mau Mau organization of the Kikuyu in Kenya.

White and Black Magic

The distinction between white (good) and black (evil) magic is clear throughout Africa. The former is helpful and protective and falls within the sphere of the medicine-man, who prepares healing potions and of the witch-doctor who wages war on witches; the latter is the monopoly of wizards and sorcerers.

White magic tackles the problems of disease, both physical and mental, of accidents and misfortunes, and of natural disasters like drought. It works in the open, in the light of day, and nearly always entails a public ceremony. Black magic is black because the practitioner, man or woman, works in the dark.

Africans have not the slightest doubt that the evil charms, spells and methods of these wicked people are effective and even lethal.

Sudden death from sheer terror is not unknown in cases where a man discovers an evil fetish like a cracked bone secreted by a wizard in his house; or sees a trail of powder laid around his hut; or finds a clay image of himself pinned down with pegs and pierced with thorns in the head and heart. The psychological effect of such methods is not hard to assess. For where such evil objects are being used against a man, obviously the intention is evil and he is therefore in grave danger.

Whatever else has changed on the continent of Africa, the deep-rooted belief in magic, both white and black, has not. And no one can say how many innocent men and women have been terrified, tortured and even murdered as a result of the African's obsession with witchcraft.

Witches: The Continuing Fear

Africans base their fear of witches on the argument that somebody – some person or spirit – has to be responsible for the inexplicable. Why, for instance, should one man be struck down by lightning and another spared – especially if the dead man is a good hunter, a loving husband, a kind father? We call such a happening 'coincidence'. The African calls it witchcraft. For witches, although they are mortal, have supernatural powers which they invariably use to harm, never to benefit, their neighbours. A few of them are men – wizards or warlocks; but the majority are women, though not necessarily the poor old crones of Western tradition. An African witch can be young, because her evil powers and activities have nothing to do with her age or appearance.

In fact, there is not much she can do about her inherent wickedness, though if she is lucky her supernatural powers will be quiescent, and she will be able to live a normal life as a member of her community. But if she is an active witch, she will be bound to use her evil powers until she is caught by the witch-doctor.

A witch invariably practises her activities at night, at which time she leaves her body and flies off, sometimes as a ball of fire, sometimes as a night bird, to the tops of trees or a secret grove, where witches convene for their nocturnal orgies. These orgies take the form of cannibalism, for witches feed on human flesh and are especially partial to the meat of babies and young

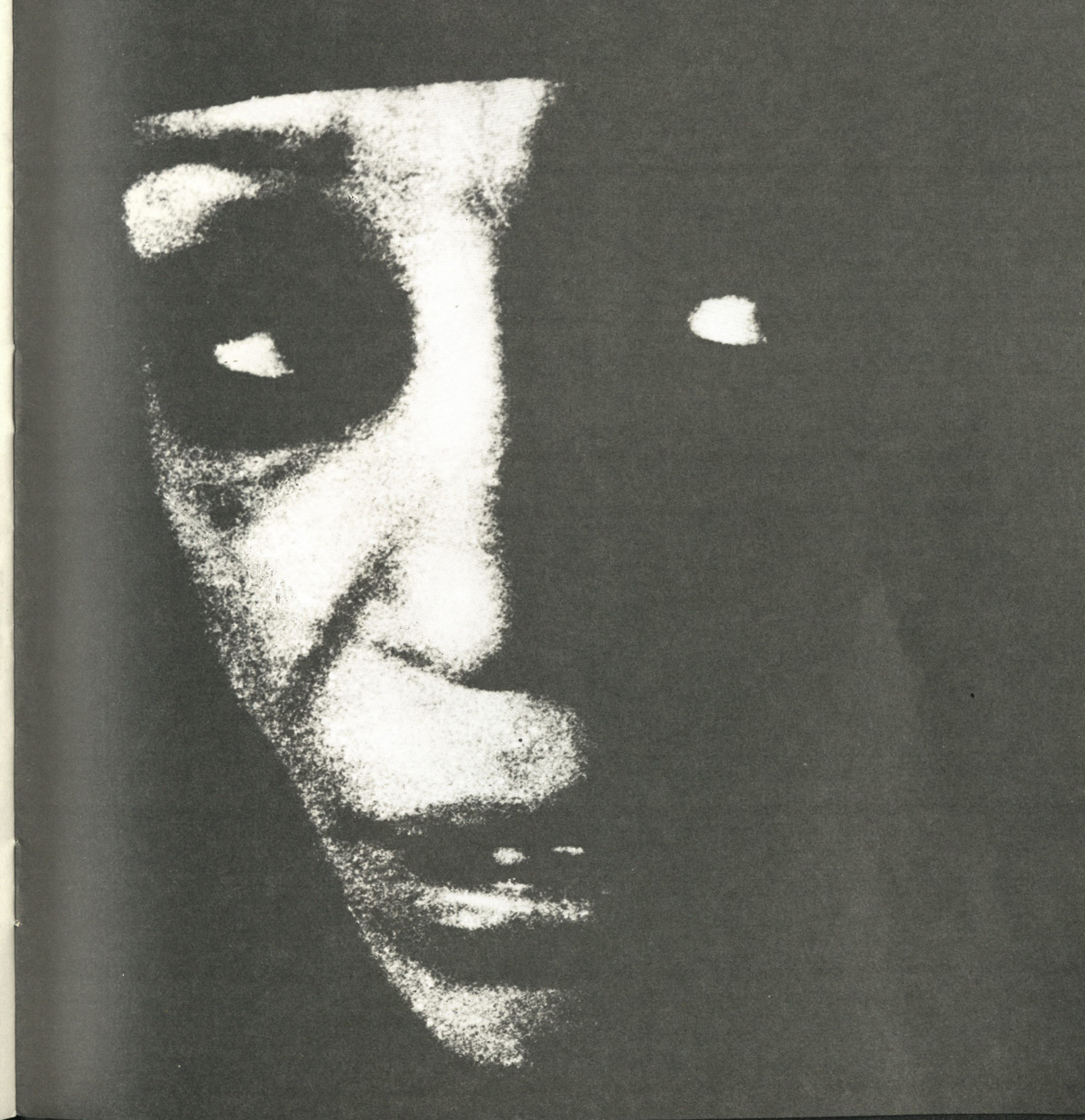
Magic, Lightning and Failure

In most cases magic does not attempt the impossible; rain-magicians do not make rain in the dry season, and magic against thieves is made against unknown persons, not named persons. Hence there will be many successes, which are remembered. The failures can be interpreted within the system by invoking other beliefs. Every year before the Trade Winds bring their rains, Zulus call in special magicians to treat their villages against lightning. Most villages are not struck, but if a man's village *is* struck, he will say the magician was bad, his medicines were poor, a taboo was broken, a witch wielded the lightning, or Heaven itself was powerfully determined to strike the village. We reason similarly. If your house, which you have protected with lightning conductors, is nevertheless struck, you may say that the workman was bad, the wires poor, a rule of craft in installation was broken, the charge was too strong. You do not rush to the Royal Society to deny the validity of scientific theory. The total system of beliefs thus allows for a good deal of failure.

Max Gluckman
Custom and Conflict in Africa

Barnaby's Picture Library

Mansell Collection



children. The flesh-eating, however, seems to be regarded by many Africans as a mystical rite, a devouring of the 'soul' of the victim, whence the slow withering away of his actual body. The witch-doctor must, therefore, hasten to identify the witch responsible, before she figuratively consumes a vital organ like the heart, lungs or liver. Consequently, if he catches the witch and proves her guilt by the various magical tests employed (trial by ordeal), a quick confession is extorted from her by torture. She is then summarily disposed of.

These ideas of witches and witchcraft are so deeply implanted in the African mind that not even the impact of urbanization, education and technological changes has affected the basic convictions. All Christian missionaries admit that these beliefs constitute the greatest obstacle to genuine conversion. But before witchcraft can be eradicated from Africa, somebody has to explain to the unsophisticated native why some innocent person should be singled out for misfortune. Neither God nor the good spirits would do such a cruel and unjust thing. Therefore, the act must have been the work of an evil power in the person of a witch or a sorcerer.

Medicines, Charms, Fetishes

African medicines are of two kinds: straightforward potions distilled from plants and roots, prescribed in much the same spirit as Western medicines and drugs are prescribed for simple ailments; and magical potions or powders concocted from weird ingredients and prescribed for more difficult cases.

Examples of the latter potions are the various concoctions used for warding off evil spirits or giving a man protection from his enemies. From northern Nigeria comes this secret formula:

> Cut off the head of a snake and in it plant the seed of the swamp dock. Bury the head in a grave which must be seven days old. Pour water on it for three consecutive nights. When the plant has grown to a height of three or four feet, go again to the graveyard and strip naked. Pull up the swamp dock and use it as a girdle. If anyone attempts to attack you, the girdle will become a snake that will bite your enemy.

We can see from this formula that medicine in Africa is more magic than science. Knowing nothing of bacteriology, the medicine-man relies to a great extent on psychology and faith, hence the hundreds of spells and charms, one for almost every contingency. Barrenness is supposedly cured by all manner of ju-jus; pregnancy safeguarded by others.

Men wear antelope horns, animal teeth, gourds, knives, iron bracelets and leather pouches. Both sexes in primitive Africa are often mutilated on the face or body as part of this all-pervasive charm cult. Mutilations, bizarre to Western eyes, take the form of scars, filing down of teeth, extending the lips or ears with discs or rings, and plugging the nostrils.

The more bizarre of these mutilations are seen less and less as Africans adopt the outward trappings of Western culture, including our clothes. But the individual still puts his trust in his favourite ju-ju which he will continue to wear in secret even when he has left his village in the forest for one of the large modern African cities.

Underlying Myths

Together with all religions, paganism has a collection of myths to explain the Creation of the World and the Fall of Man. While each tribe has its own account, the basic theme is nearly always the same – not unlike the Hebrew version as told in the first chapter of Genesis.

God is said to have made man and woman from clay. These two mortals lived for a time in Paradise, from which they were expelled due to some 'original sin'. A Nigerian legend blames the woman for annoying God by striking the sky with her pounding stick. A Congolese story says that her continual nagging became so intolerable that God lowered her down from heaven in a basket.

Whatever the reason for the expulsion from Paradise, man was alienated from God who, in most African myths, retires into his own domain where he grows older and, it appears, more maudlin. For according to some, his old eyes dribble with tears, which become the rain that falls upon the earth below. According to others, he spends a great deal of his time quarrelling with his wife. Claps of thunder are the Great God shouting.

The underlying notion of nearly all African creation myths seems to be that God and man once lived on earth and conversed together. Then man – or more frequently woman – erred, and the Fall resulted. Ever since then, men have tried to climb back into heaven and have even built towers and ladders for that purpose, but without success. Consequently, when Christian missionaries arrived in Africa with the news that man could be saved through Jesus Christ, the appeal of the new religion was enormous, since no African myth explained how man was to ascend into Paradise.

(See also numerous articles on individual African tribes and ceremonies.)

JAMES WELLARD

FURTHER READING: the following are available in most large public libraries. They provide a good introduction to African religion and have extensive bibliographies: Daryll Forde ed., *African Worlds* (International African Institute, 1954); G. P. Murdock, *Africa, Its People and their Culture History* (McGraw-Hill, 1959); Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (S.P.C.K., 1962); Edwin W. Smith ed., *African Ideas of God* (Edinburgh House Press, 1950); James Wellard, *Lost Worlds of Africa* (Hutchinson, 1967).

Possessed by Gods and Devils

Above left Ewe man of Ghana in trance cuts himself without loss of blood, to demonstrate the power of the war god who has possessed him
Above right Ubangi medicine-man beating a sick girl to drive out devils. Her back is daubed with herbs and warm water. The belief that all diseases are caused by evil spirits which have taken possession of the patient's body is found all over the world: in Africa 'a great deal of the medicine-man's treatment is psychological and belongs to the sphere of faith healing. Some Western observers of his methods, particularly in the case of neurotics, go so far as to say that he has as much success as our psychiatrists . . .
Facing page: above A Nigerian child, and a couple, in trance believing themselves to be possessed by the Holy Ghost
Below Zar priestess in Egypt. The priestess goes into trance to expel certain evil spirits, called zars, from her flock

Agape

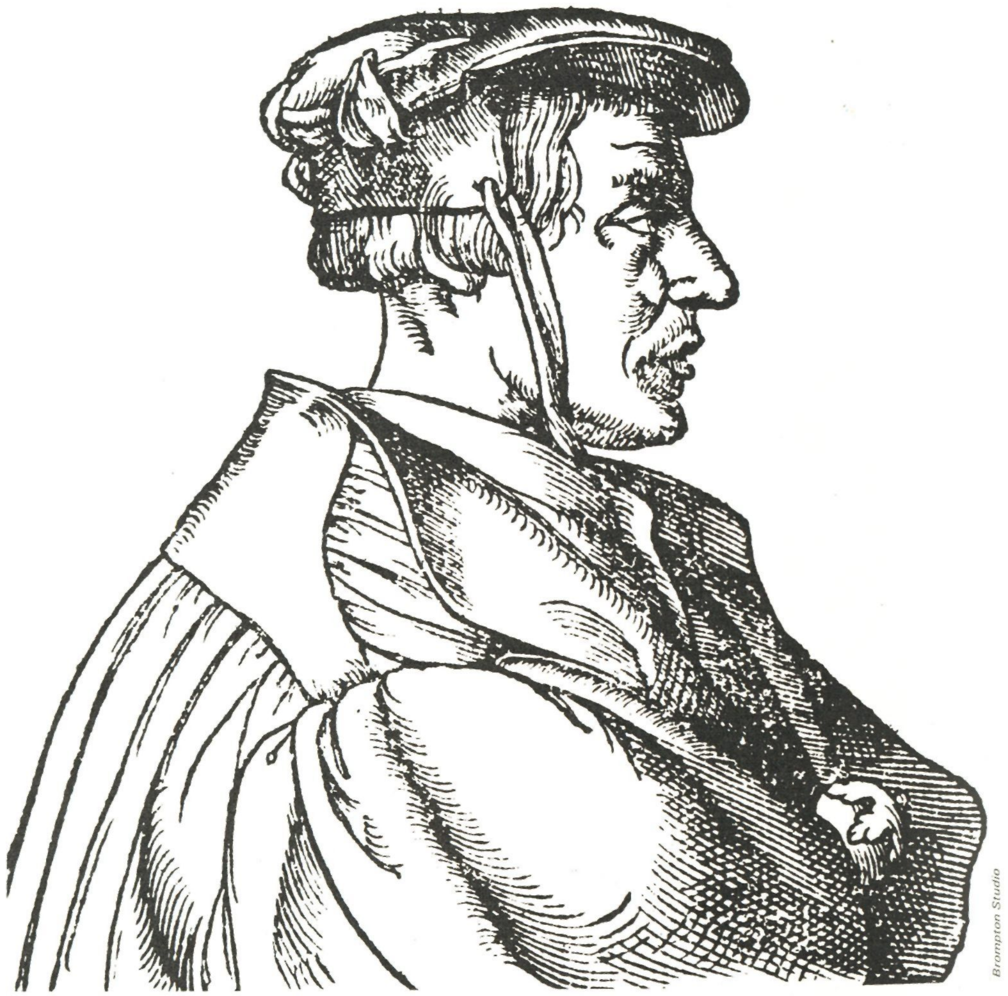
A Greek word for 'love': name of the early Christian 'love feast', a common meal celebrated with hymns and prayers, often in connection with the eucharist: now used to distinguish Christian love from sexual love, Eros.
See MASS.

Agriculture

Ploughing, sowing, reaping and other agricultural operations, depending for success on the regularity of Nature and the bounty of the gods, are associated with important rituals and myths.
See numerous articles, including CORN; EARTH; FERTILITY; HARVEST; MOTHER GODDESS; SPRING; VEGETATION GODS.

Agrippa gained a reputation in his own day as a great sorcerer who had dealings with demons but his real importance comes from his book Occult Philosophy, *in which he defended magic as the supreme path to the understanding of the world and God*

AGRIPPA



Brompton Studio

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA von Nettesheim was born at Cologne in 1486 and died in 1535, almost certainly at Grenoble. His books on magic and occultism were widely known and he was both famous and infamous at the courts and universities of western Europe. His real name was Heinrich Cornelis. After the fashion of the time, he latinized Cornelis into Cornelius and awarded himself the bogus noble title of Agrippa von Nettesheim, from the Roman founder of Cologne and the name of a place near Cologne.

Undisciplined, unstable and erratically brilliant, Agrippa was often forced to live by his wits and played at different times the roles of occult scholar and alchemist, faith healer and demonologist, court astrologer, theologian, lawyer and doctor, historian, town orator, financial adviser and secret political agent. He worked now for the Pope and now for his rival the Emperor, switching sides as opportunity offered. He founded secret societies whose members he was not above exploiting. He mixed with royalty at one moment, only to find himself in prison for debt the next.

Agrippa moved restlessly about Europe until his enemies caught him at Grenoble, imprisoned and tortured him, and left him so broken that he only survived his release a matter of weeks. Much of his career is shrouded in mystery and even before his death he had become the centre of stories in which he figured as a master black magician. Goethe drew on some of these stories for the title character of his play *Faust*.

Agrippa's best-known work, *De Occulta Philosophia* (Occult Philosophy) was published in three volumes in 1531 but had been written much earlier, in 1510, possibly during a visit to England. It is based on ideas current at the time: that man is a miniature copy of God, made 'in the image of God' as the Bible says; that the whole universe, taken together, is God; and that man is therefore a miniature copy of the universe. The universe (the macrocosm or 'great world') is built on the model of man (the microcosm or 'small world') and so, like man, it has a soul. (See also MACROCOSM.)

Agrippa says that everything which exists has a 'soul' or spiritual component, part of the total world soul, which shows itself in the magical properties of herbs, metals, stones, animals and other phenomena of Nature.

For instance, the magnet attracts iron, whoever wears the stone called heliotrope becomes invisible, and a sure contraceptive for a woman is to drink mule's urine every month because mules are sterile.

Agrippa considers the relationship between matter and spirit in the light of various arts and sciences, including music, geometry and, especially important, astrology. Then he turns to the human soul and its relationship to the body, as revealed by necromancy – the summoning up of the spirits of the dead – and in the religions of all ages.

Agrippa builds up a system of the universe in which everything is part of a great spiritual whole, which is God. Magic is the way of investigating this system but magic is only for the initiated few, for men like Agrippa himself, members – as most of them were, in fact – of secret societies. He does not press the point fully home but his conclusion that man 'containeth in himself all things which are in God' is well in line with the magical theory that the magician can make himself God and wield the supreme power of God in the universe.

Agrippa's other main work forms a complete contrast to his first one. Written in 1526, at a time when his fortunes were at a low ebb, and published three years later. *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium,* (The Uncertainty and Vanity of the Sciences and Arts) maintains that on balance the arts and sciences are harmful to man. Through an encyclopedic review of all the sciences and arts known to him, which provides a mine of information and holds up a fascinating mirror to the culture of the times, Agrippa contrasts the disillusion which all this knowledge brings with the spiritual strength gained through the only sure and beneficial thing on which man can rely – the divinely revealed word of God.

Agrippa is rarely an original thinker and his philosophy is a compilation of ideas from many sources. He ransacked the works of writers ancient and modern for ideas which he adapted in a tremendous display of erudition to his own magical system. But second-hand though much of his occult lore is, it is shot through with moments of genuine poetic utterance.

Of his contemporaries, Paracelsus was far the greater genius but Agrippa, with his virtues and vices, provides the best mirror to the social and intellectual ferment of his time.

D. G. DYER

Man and God

Agrippa argues that man contains the whole world and God in himself:

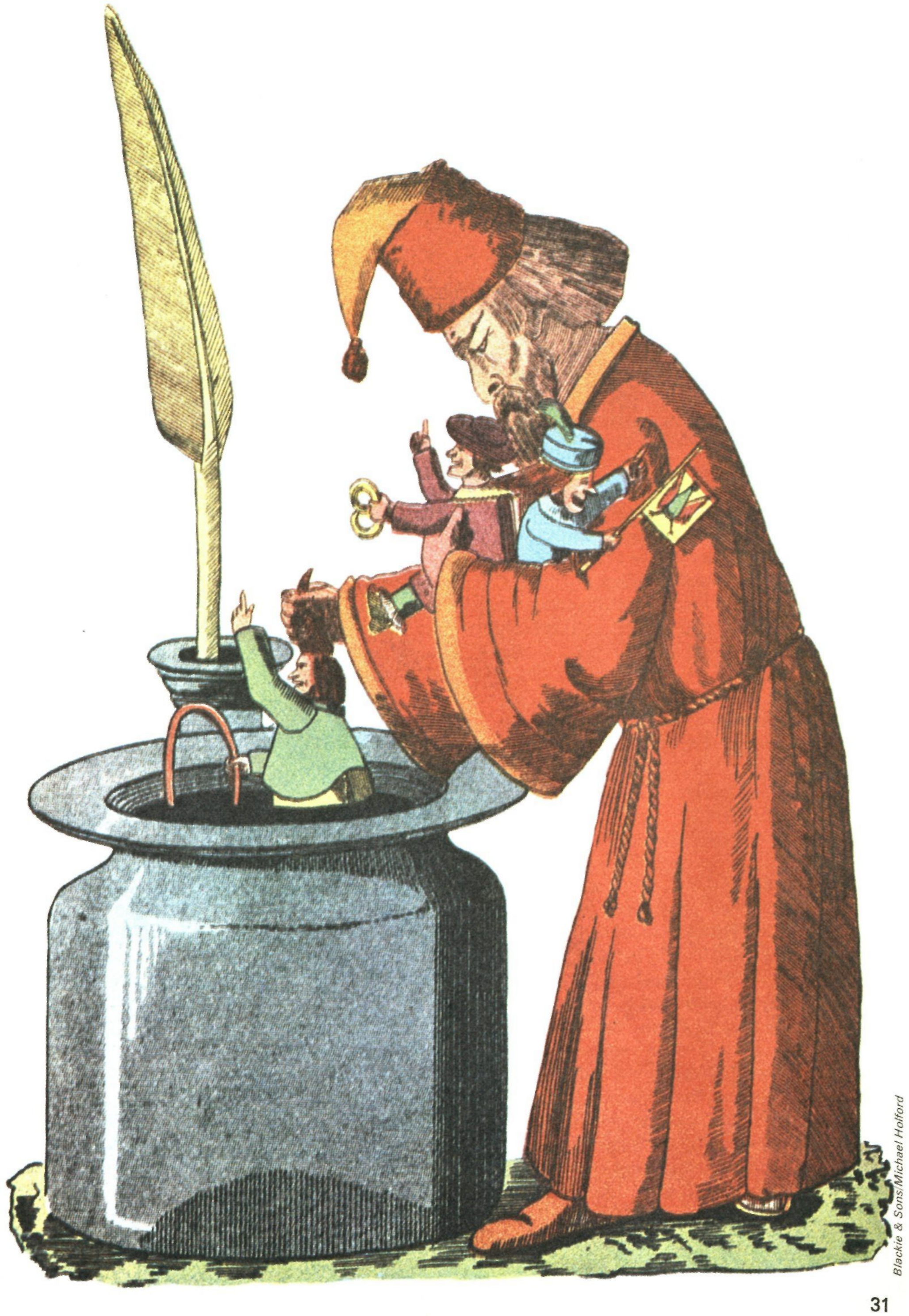
> Therefore man . . . hath in himself All that is contained in the greater world, so that there remaineth nothing which is not found even truly and really in man himself, and all these things do perform the same duties in him as in the great world: There are in him the four Elements with the most true properties of their nature, and in him an ethereal body, the Chariot of the soul, in proportion corresponding to the Heaven: There are in him the vegetative life of Plants, the senses of animals, of celestial spirits, the Angelical reason and the Divine understanding . . . man, being made another world, doth comprehend all the parts thereof in himself but also doth receive and contain even God himself . . . Therefore man is the most express Image of God, seeing man containeth in himself all things which are in God . . . Whosoever therefore shall know himself, shall know all things in himself; especially, he shall know God, according to whose Image he was made.
>
> *Occult Philosophy*
> (17th century translation)

Agrippa as Black Magician

One of the many stories told about Agrippa was that he went out one day, leaving the key of a secret room in the house with his wife. She foolishly lent it to the lodger, a student, who went into the room and found a huge book of spells, which he began to read. After a while he looked up and found a demon standing in front of him, asking why it had been summoned. He gaped at it in horror and the demon strangled him.

Agrippa returned and, fearing a charge of murder, made the demon restore the student to life for a few hours. The young man was seen walking in the street but when the demon's magic wore off, he collapsed.

Below left **Portrait of Agrippa from the frontispiece of his *Occult Philosophy,* in which he defended magic**
Right **Agrippa's reputation as a magician lasted long after his death in 1535. In the mid-19th century he is 'the great Agrippa', who punishes three naughty boys by plunging them into his inkwell, in Heinrich Hoffmann's gruesome *Struwwelpeter,* which remained standard children's reading until quite recently**



Blackie & Sons/Michael Holford

'I have rent the sky, I have befouled it . . . I have befouled the waters, pierced open the earth' is the triumphal cry of Ahriman, the power of evil in the old Persian religion of Zoroastrianism. But his triumph brings its own defeat when evil has eaten up everything it can and has nothing left to destroy but itself

AHRIMAN

FOR 13 CENTURIES Persia has been a Moslem country but before the Moslem conquest the state religion was Zoroastrianism. Ahriman is the Zoroastrian Devil (not the Moslem one, whose name is Shaitan, more familiar to us as Satan). We first hear of Ahriman in the 7th century BC when he plays a significant part in the *Gathas*, or 'Songs', of Zoroaster, the prophet of ancient Persia and the founder of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrianism is generally held to be a classical form of religious dualism; that is to say, it holds that the universe is not the creation of one god or principle but of two – a holy power and an evil one. Some religions identify evil with matter, with what Christians call 'the flesh'; but in Zoroastrianism matter, far from being evil, is the creation of the holy god and is therefore in itself entirely good. Evil is a *spiritual* power, negative and destructive: it is called the 'Lie' and is the principle of disruption and death, the adversary of Truth.

In the *Gathas* there is the basic dualism between Truth and the Lie: these are principles which exist in opposition to each other for all time. Of the origin of the Lie nothing is said. Truth, however, is seen as an aspect of the One True God, or Ahura Mazdah, 'the Wise Lord': twice it is called his 'Son'. If the 'Lie' is the principle of evil, Ahriman is its personification. He is not yet the eternal Adversary of the One God but he *is* the eternal Adversary of an entity called the 'Holy Spirit'. From the beginning the two Spirits face each other in implacable hostility. But evidently there was a beginning, for the Holy Spirit, like God the Son in Christian theology, was born of the Father and it appears that he was also the twin brother of the Evil Spirit:

> In the beginning those two spirits who are the well-endowed (?) twins were known as the one good and the other evil, in thought, word and deed. Between them the wise chose rightly, not so the fools. And when these Spirits met they established in the beginning life and death that in the end the followers of the Lie should meet with the worst existence, but the followers of Truth with the Best Mind. Of these two Spirits he who was of the Lie chose to do the worst things; but the Most Holy Spirit, clothed in rugged heaven, (chose) Truth as did (all) who sought with zeal to do the pleasure of the Wise Lord by (doing) good works. Between the two the demons did not choose rightly; for as they deliberated delusion overcame them so that they chose the most Evil Mind. Then did they, with one accord, rush headlong unto Fury that they might thereby extinguish the existence of mortal men.

Alinari

Above **Lion-headed god of Mithraism (a religion which rivalled Christianity). He is believed to be identical with Ahriman, 'the most evil mind', ruler of death and destruction: now in the Vatican Museum**

Right **Ohrmazd, the principle of truth and light, riding on horseback, tramples on Ahriman's snake-covered head. Zoroastrians believed that the perpetual struggle between the two would end in the triumph of Ohrmazd. On the left a Persian king tramples an enemy. From a rock relief at Naqsh-i-Rustem, Iran**

From this passage two facts emerge. First, the two Spirits are twins and since Ahura Mazdah, the Wise Lord, is the father of the Holier, it follows that he must also be the father of the Evil One. Secondly the Evil Spirit, though he is 'of the Lie' must *choose* evil: he is not evil absolutely but becomes evil by choice. Once the choice is made, however, he is no more capable of change than is Satan in the Christian tradition: he is forever committed to the Lie.

Declaration of War

Zoroastrianism is above all the religion of free will. Not only is Ahriman, the Evil Spirit, evil by choice and the Holy Spirit holy by choice, but the One Supreme God, Ahura Mazdah, has also to commit himself – has to choose between Truth and the Lie.

Ahura Mazdah chooses Truth. 'Holy and good Right-mindedness do we choose: let it be ours.' This is a declaration of war on the Lie and those who have chosen the Lie. On both sides this is an irrevocable decision and the battle must be fought to the finish.

In the *Gathas*, then, which are now generally admitted to be the work of the prophet Zoroaster himself, the supreme God aligns himself with the Holy Spirit against the power of the Lie. The Evil Spirit, on the other hand, chooses to lead the powers of the Lie against the Holy Spirit and therefore against the Supreme God. But though he is the sworn enemy of the Holy Spirit, he is also his twin and must therefore also be the son of his father, the 'Wise Lord'. Would it not, then, be more true to say that the Zoroastrianism of Zoroaster is not a dualism at all but a form of monotheism (belief in one god), at least in the sense that the Wise Lord is the First Cause of all things? In later times the Zoroastrians became divided on this issue.

A purely dualist solution was favoured by the fact that in the course of time the Holy Spirit was simply identified with the Wise Lord. The name Ahura Mazdah took on its later form Ohrmazd, and Ohrmazd and Ahriman then appear as independent principles eternally separate and distinct, eternally opposed. This is the form of Zoroastrianism that we meet with in the Sasanian period, from the 2nd to the 7th centuries AD, when the Persian Empire was revived under the house of Sasan and Zoroastrianism became the official religion of the Empire.

By this time Ahriman had grown in stature: he had become an independent monarch who held undisputed sway in his own kingdom of darkness and death. But the myth of the two eternal twins lingered on because the problem of evil is at the very centre of Zoroastrianism.

Our experience of life seems to show that if God is all-powerful, he cannot be absolutely good – because he lets evil exist; and conversely, if he is absolutely good, he cannot be all-powerful – because he evidently cannot prevent evil. A cut-and-dried dualism absolves God from any responsibility for evil, however indirect, but he necessarily pays for his goodness at the price of his omnipotence. But if the old legend of the primordial twins was retained, and since the Wise Lord and the Holy Spirit were now identified in the single person of Ohrmazd, could it not be that these twin poles of good and evil themselves derived their being from a neutral principle which was the original Unity?

Such a principle some of the Zoroastrian theologians thought they had found in Infinite Time, which was also Infinite Space, and which they called by its ancient name Zurvan. The myth was therefore modified to suit this new theology. It has totally disappeared from the Zoroastrian texts of the period but it is preserved in Christian and other sources and is certainly authentic. The myth which has come down to us is a popular presentation of a far more subtle theological position, which seeks at all costs to preserve both the original Unity and the absolute goodness of God.

Zurvan and the Birth of Evil

The myth says that the great god Zurvan existed before there was anything else. He offered sacrifice so that he might have a son but after a long time he began to wonder whether his hopes were vain. As soon as this thought occurred to him, Ohrmazd and

The Evil Spirit must choose evil: he is not evil absolutely but becomes evil by choice

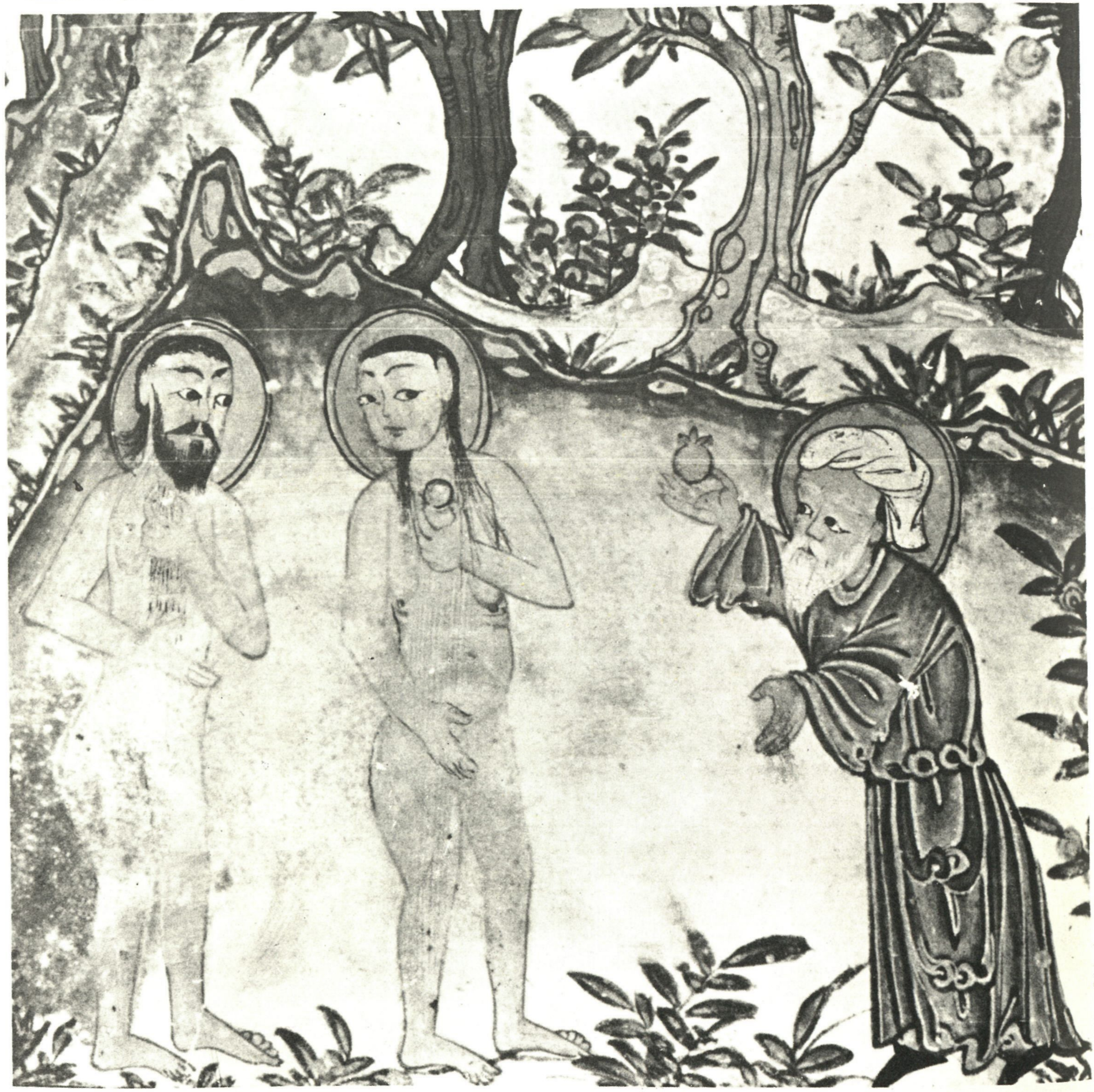
Ahriman were conceived – Ohrmazd because of Zurvan's sacrifice and Ahriman because of his doubt. Zurvan decided that whichever of them came to him first, he would make king.

> When Ahriman heard this he ripped the womb open, emerged and advanced towards his father. Zurvan, seeing him, asked 'who are you?' And he replied: 'I am your son, Ohrmazd.' And Zurvan said: 'My son is light and fragrant, but you are dark and stinking.' And he wept most bitterly. And as they were talking together, Ohrmazd was born in his turn, light and fragrant; and Zurvan, seeing him, knew that it was his son Ohrmazd for whom he had offered sacrifice . . . And he said (to him): 'Up till now it is I who have offered sacrifice for you; from now you shall offer sacrifice for me.' But . . . Ahriman drew near and said to him; 'Did you not vow that whichever of your sons should come to you first, to him you would give the Kingdom?' And Zurvan said to him: 'O false and wicked one, the Kingdom shall be granted you for nine thousand years, but Ohrmazd I have made a King above you, and after nine thousand years he will reign and do everything according to his good pleasure.' And Ohrmazd created the heavens and the earth and all things that are beautiful and good; but Ahriman created the demons and all that is evil and perverse. Ohrmazd created riches, Ahriman poverty.

Ahriman is born of Zurvan's doubt and rules the world, but only for nine thousand years. This partial solution of the problem of evil which made the Evil One 'prince of this world', if only for a relatively short time, did not in the end satisfy the majority of Zoroastrians. The myth of the primordial twins was set aside and the universe was neatly divided into two separate halves, light and darkness, good and evil.

In the beginning, then, 'the Light was above and the darkness beneath; and between them was the void – Ohrmazd in the light and Ahriman in the darkness. Ohrmazd knew of the existence of Ahriman and of his coming to do battle: Ahriman did not know of the existence and light of Ohrmazd.' He soon found out. Roaming around in his dismal kingdom, he reached the upper confines of his realm and saw a ray of light. He longed to get hold of it and to destroy it. Ohrmazd in his goodness offered him peace, which the Evil One summarily rejected, and leapt forward to attack the light. Ohrmazd repelled him, 'laid him low by the pure power of the Law and hurled him back into the darkness.' There he lay unconscious for over three thousand years.

Ahriman in an Islamic miniature, as an old man who offers the fatal fruit to the first human beings. The Zoroastrians borrowed the story of Adam and Eve from the Bible



University Library, Edinburgh

Having foiled this first onslaught, Ohrmazd realized that he must create a bastion between himself and Ahriman, the eternal aggressor. For this purpose he first created a spiritual universe which is an 'ideal' model of the material universe, then the material world itself.

The ideal world was to remain forever free from the pestilential attacks of Ahriman, and at its summit were the souls of the human race. When Ahriman's attack on the material world took place, it was Ohrmazd's plan that these souls should acquire bodies and go to live in the world 'to do battle with Ahriman and the Lie'. But Ohrmazd demands the free co-operation of man, he does not and will not violate the freedom of man's will.

> He took counsel with the consciousness and pre-existent souls of men and infused omniscient wisdom into them saying: 'Which seems more profitable to you, whether that I should fashion you forth in material form and that you should strive incarnate with the Lie and destroy it, and that we should resurrect you at the end, whole and immortal, and re-create you in material form, and that you should eternally be immortal, unageing, and without enemies; or that you should eternally be preserved from the Aggressor?' And the pre-existent souls of men saw by that omniscient wisdom that they would suffer evil from the Lie and Ahriman in the material world, but because at the end they would be resurrected free from the enmity of the Aggressor, whole and immortal for ever and ever, they agreed to go into the material world.

For the defeat and destruction of Ahriman, then, man's co-operation is essential. Man must become mortal and accept bodily existence in order in the end to annihilate the force of destruction, death and all evil.

Gayomart & the Lone-Created Bull

Once the souls have consented to this, Ohrmazd creates the material world: he creates the sky, water, plants, the animals in the shape of the 'lone-created Bull', and finally the first man, Gayomart 'shining like the sun'. All is now in readiness and Ahriman prepares his attack. It is devastatingly successful. Each of Ohrmazd's creations he defiles and corrupts; he slays the Bull and mortally wounds Gayomart. His triumph seems to be complete and he cries out in savage exultation:

> Perfect is my victory; for I have rent the sky, I have befouled it with murk and darkness, I have made it my stronghold. I have befouled the waters, pierced open the earth and befouled it with darkness. I have dried up the plants and brought death to the Bull, sickness to Gayomart . . . I have seized the Kingdom. On the side of Ohrmazd none remains to do battle except only man; and man isolated and alone, what can he do?

But Gayomart's seed had fallen into the earth as he died and from his seed sprang up a rhubarb plant which split in two to form the first human couple: the human race was therefore saved to continue the long arduous battle against evil which it had already freely accepted.

Moreover, the material universe was bounded by the sky which Ahriman had rent open, forgetting that it was made of 'shining metal that is the substance of steel'. He has entered into his Kingdom but the Kingdom is his prison.

This does not matter so long as he and the vices he has brought in his train can prey upon the creatures of Ohrmazd; but in the end evil which is of its nature destructive, finding that Ohrmazd's creation is slowly slipping from its grasp, will be forced to disrupt and destroy itself.

Ahriman and the demons in the world are like wild beasts that have broken into a garden, but once they have wreaked all the destruction they can, they find that they have been trapped. They make frantic efforts to get out and in doing so they use their own strength against themselves and ensure their own destruction.

The End of the Lie

Ahriman's end comes about when Ohrmazd's creation has become so spiritualized as to escape his power. Pandemonium then breaks out; demon attacks demon, each destroying the other until only Ahriman and Az, the demon of death, greed and lust, are left.

Az turns on Ahriman and threatens to swallow him, and Ahriman is forced to appeal to his eternal enemy to deliver him from his former ally. Ohrmazd will not relent. The Spirit of Obedience destroys the threatening demon Az and Ohrmazd himself lays Ahriman low.

Does this mean that Ahriman is finally annihilated? According to popular mythology, yes: 'he is dragged outside the sky and has his head cut off.' But according to more sophisticated accounts, he cannot be annihilated because he is the *substance* of evil and, according to the particular brand of philosophy the Zoroastrians had adopted, a substance by definition cannot be destroyed.

The technical term used means literally to 'put out of action': 'he is thrown out of the sky through the hole by which he rushed in; and at that hole he is laid low and knocked unconscious so that he will never arise again . . . He will be forever powerless and, as it were, slain and henceforth neither he nor his creation will exist.' With his destruction a new heaven and a new earth are created, all men are resurrected, and those who were confined to hell are released from their torments, and all enjoy perpetual bliss for evermore in the company of Ohrmazd, the Wise Lord.

While he still exists as a conscious being, Ahriman is intensely active in this world. He is the Adversary of both God and man, the Destroyer, the author of death, a 'liar and a deceiver'. His aim is to deceive men as to the true nature of God, and so to bring them to hate Ohrmazd and to love himself. By these means he entices them into hell of which he is the overlord. In fact he is not the equal of Ohrmazd and never really stands a chance because he 'comes to know things too late'. So he is defeated as much by his own stupidity as by Ohrmazd's wisdom and power.

(See also DEVIL; OHRMAZD; MANICHEANS; ZOROASTRIANISM; ZURVAN.)

R. C. ZAEHNER

FURTHER READING: R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961).

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Ahura Mazdah

A name of Ohrmazd, the good god of Zoroastrian religion, twin brother and opponent of the evil god Ahriman, who will eventually be overthrown by Ohrmazd after ruling the world for nine thousand years.

See AHRIMAN; OHRMAZD.

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Air

Connected with 'life' and 'soul' in mythology, mysticism and magic, because living creatures cannot survive without it: connected with Maat, the Egyptian goddess of truth, and with the card called the Fool in the Tarot pack: control of breathing is an important technique in yoga.

See BREATH.

Rampant sexuality, torrents of filthy language and extraordinary bodily contortions are nowadays associated with hysteria and other mental disorders. In the 17th century they were put down to possession by devils

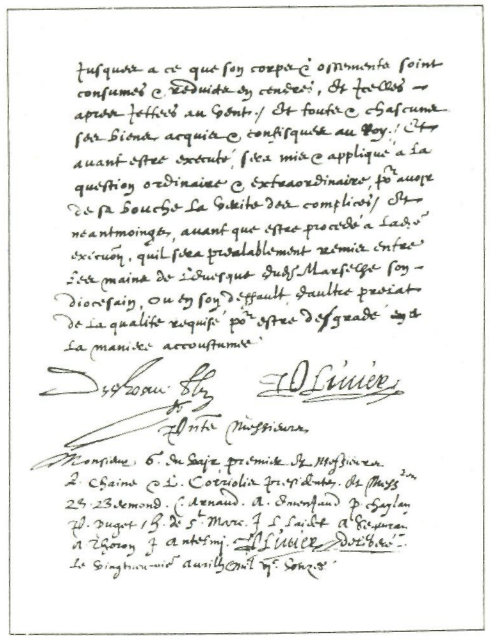
AIX-EN-PROVENCE NUNS

IN THE FIRST 25 YEARS of the 17th century the witchcraft delusion in France reached its high peak of intensity. A characteristic feature of the period was the prevalence of cases of demonic possession, involving priests and nuns. Demons were believed to be attacking the human race, obsessing the minds and controlling the bodies of victims into whom they had entered through the bodily orifices. In a reign of terror against every form of demonism, the Inquisitors attempted to withstand what they believed to be a mass assault levelled at Church and society by the Devil, working through his agents – sorcerers and witches.

In the year 1609 signs of diabolical invasion appeared at Aix-en-Provence in southern France, the victim being Madeleine de Demandolx de la Palud, a girl who had a history of emotional instability. In 1605 she had been admitted to the Ursuline convent at Aix but had been returned to the care of her parents, a well-established Provencal family, to recover from the attacks of depression which afflicted her when away from home. Unfortunately she fell under the influence of Father Louis Gaufridi, parish priest of Accoules in Marseilles and a friend of the family.

Like so many clerics of that age Gaufridi was far from ascetic in his way of life. Several women were known to be infatuated with him, and his services as a confessor were in particular demand among the wives of the citizens. The disparity between the ages of Gaufridi and Madeleine (he was 34, she was 13) was apparently no barrier to the priest. His visits became ever more frequent and he was often closeted alone with her for long periods. Inevitably, perhaps, she fell violently in love with him, and possibly he with her.

The story soon reached the ears of Catherine de Gaumer, head of the Ursuline convent at Marseilles, who warned the child's mother of the dangers to which her daughter was exposed. A hint was conveyed to the priest Gaufridi that he should cease his attentions at once.



Above Last page of the judgement against Louis Gaufridi, with the signatures of those who condemned him for bewitching the nuns of Aix. He was brutally tortured before being dragged on a hurdle through the streets and strangled. His body was then burned

Below Convents were often the scene of psychological disturbances which were put down to the action of devils. From *La Religieuse*, a film about a young girl who is forced into a convent against her will, and becomes the prey of demonic forces

In the following year Madeleine was admitted to the Ursuline convent at Marseilles under the direct control of Mother de Gaumer, to whom she revealed the full story of her relations with Gaufridi, which she said involved sexual intercourse since her childhood.

Hordes of Demons

It was considered wise to move Madeleine out of danger of any further association with the priest by transferring her to the distant convent at Aix. The affair might have been forgotten had not Madeleine, two years later at the age of 16, suddenly fallen victim to what in contemporary eyes was unmistakably demonic possession. Her body became contorted, hordes of demons surrounded her and in a fit of rage she destroyed a crucifix.

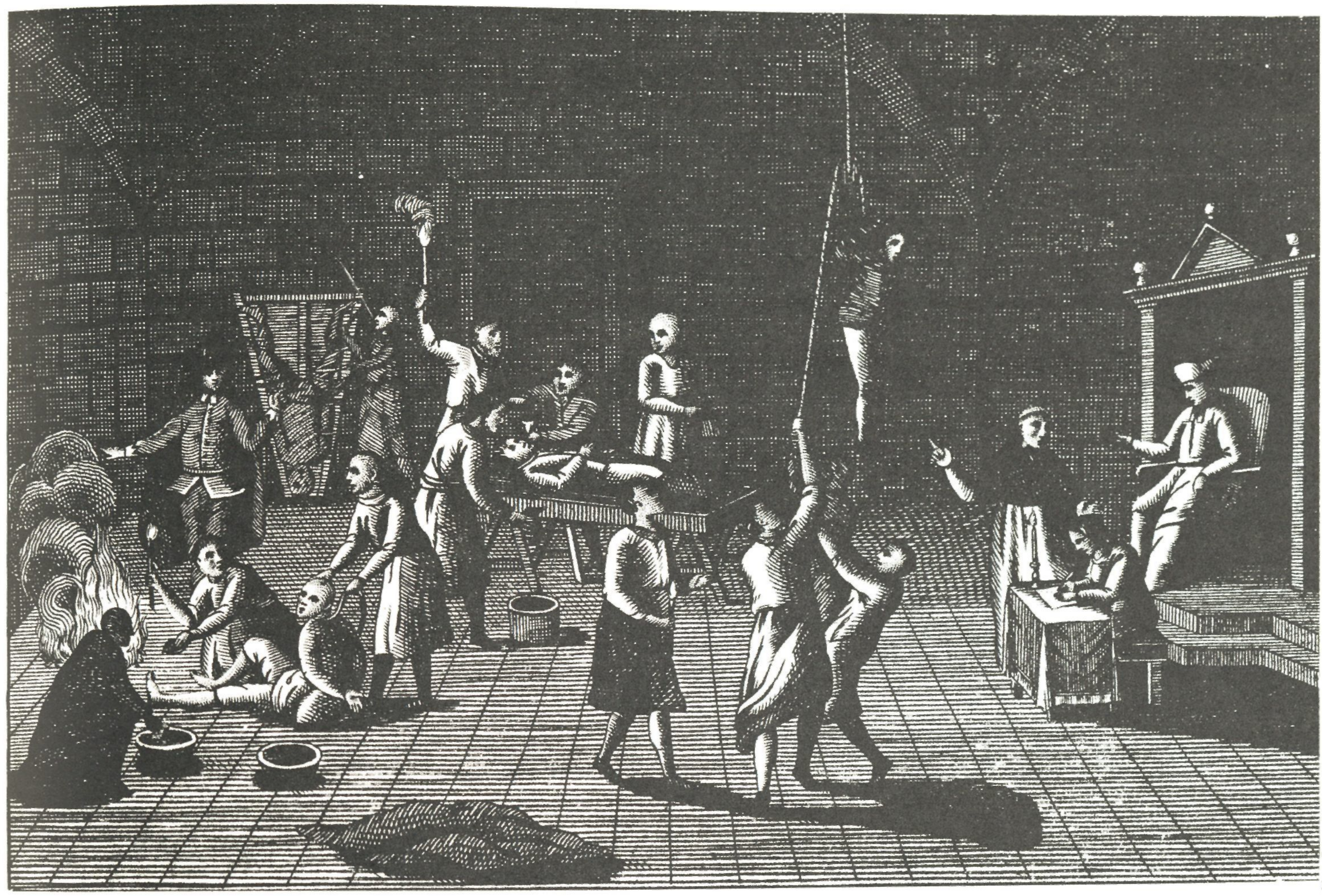
Such states of mind were not uncommon in convents and were usually cleared up very quickly by exorcism – a 17th century equivalent of modern psychiatric treatment. This case proved more obstinate, however, as the Jesuit Father Romillon discovered when his attempts to drive out the possessing demons failed.

Exorcism was an extremely complex ritual, requiring infinite patience and skill. It involved a violent verbal assault on the devil in possession, as well as prayers and the liberal use of holy water. The patient was often made to breathe in noxious fumes, to accelerate the departure of the devil from so inhospitable a habitation.

Father Gaufridi was questioned about his sexual relations with Madeleine and insisted that his association with her had been proper in every respect. Further exorcisms, however, brought from the mouth of the possessed girl damning accusations that Gaufridi was a devil worshipper and had copulated with her since she was 13. The situation at the convent was now getting out of hand, for three more nuns were possessed by devils; and by the end of the year the number had risen to eight. The most severely afflicted of these was Sister Louise Capeau whose ravings and contortions were, if anything, even more hideous than Madeleine's.

Reduced to desperation, Father Romillon sought the aid of one of the most famous witch-hunters of the age, the Grand Inquisitor Sebastian Michaelis. The Flemish exorcist, Father Domptius, was also called in and managed to produce from the mouth of Louise the harsh, blaspheming howls of three terrifying devils, by name Grésil, Sonnillon and Vérin, each of whom was high in the hierarchy of hell.

It was Vérin who accused Gaufridi of causing Madeleine's condition, revealing to the amazed exorcist that no less than 6666 ferocious evil spirits were now in possession of her body, the most eminent of these being the devils Leviathan, Baalberith, Asmodeus, Astaroth and the mighty Beelzebub, second only in authority and infamy to Lucifer himself.



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Engraving from an edition of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, showing the types of torture used by the Inquisition. The man hanging from the pulley is suffering the 'strappado', intended to dislocate his shoulders; a more extreme form of this was 'squassation'

Cannibalism and Perversion

Father Gaufridi was summoned from his parish and ordered to exorcize Louise Capeau. No expert in this highly specialized treatment, he failed miserably and heard himself denounced as a sorcerer and cannibal by the very demons he was struggling to expel. Typical of their denunciations was: 'Louis Gaufridi outside makes believe that he is a saint; however, inside he is full of iniquity. He feigns to abstain from flesh; nevertheless he makes himself drunk with the flesh of little children . . . whom he has eaten, the others whom he has suffocated and afterwards dug up all cry before God for vengeance upon crimes so execrable.' Gaufridi's reply to the dangerous charge of sorcery was not only curious but also damning, for he said: 'If I were a witch I would certainly give my soul to a thousand devils.' This statement was regarded as a confession of guilt by the Inquisitors, who flung Gaufridi into prison.

Meanwhile, the possessed nun Louise attempted to outdo Madeleine by loudly insisting that Gaufridi had committed every imaginable sexual perversion. The alarmed authorities immediately ordered the priest's rooms to be searched for magical objects or books but were surprised and disappointed to discover nothing of an incriminating nature. They learnt from those who knew him that he was well regarded in his parish. They released him and let him return to his parish. Here he clamoured for the vindication of his good name, and demanded that his accusers be punished.

Throughout this period the nun Madeleine never ceased to be wracked in body and spirit by the tormenting devils and the convent was in complete disarray as the result of her ravings, obscenities and accusations against Gaufridi. Overwhelmed by the 6666 furious demons within her, she sometimes neighed like a horse, while her bones creaked and groaned like a tree bending before a mighty storm.

The case of the possessed nuns of Aix was now rocking France. On the one side stood Gaufridi, insisting upon vindication, and on the other the Grand Inquisitor Michaelis, victor of a thousand battles with Satan, determined to bring Gaufridi to trial. The result was predictable. In 1611 the case came before a court in Aix and although he could not at first have realized it, the priest's doom was sealed.

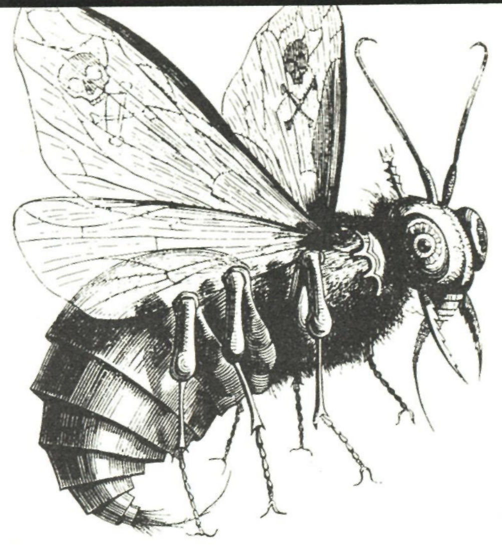
The behaviour in court of the two nuns, Madeleine and Louise, was by 17th century standards typical of an advanced state of diabolical possession. Madeleine in particular was often demented, shrieking, crying and alternating between violent denunciations of Gaufridi as a devil worshipper and wizard, and the complete retraction of the same accusations. Then she would return to the charge of cannibalism. 'Much he cares for your salt fish or your eggs. He eats good smoking flesh of little children which is brought to him invisibly from the synagogue' (the meeting of the witches). Then she would expose her passion for him by pleading for a single word of kindness from his lips. Sometimes she would be overcome by the wildest lust and it became painfully obvious to those in court that the girl was experiencing an orgasm before their eyes, her convulsions 'representing the sexual act with violent movements of the lower part of her body'.

In a frenzied reaction against life itself she twice attempted suicide. During the course of the trial it was discovered that she possessed 'Devil's marks' on her body, the secret brands by which Satan recognized his own. These marks later vanished in a mysterious fashion.

The Pact with Satan

Gaufridi was brought into court shattered by the mental anguish and physical tortures he had suffered in prison. His body had been shaved and searched for Devil's marks, three of which had been found as further evidence against him. To complete his misery, a pact with Satan signed in his own blood was produced in court, under the terms of which all women were to be made subject to his will.

It was common knowledge that the pact with the Devil required the surrender of the body and soul of a witch or sorcerer at the end of 20 years. But with true legalistic formality it was conceded that should the pact be written on virgin parchment or pre-



Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies, one of the demons which possessed Madeleine de Demandolx; from the *Dictionnaire Infernal*

pared outside the magic circle, the agreement was null and void. Such contracts between a sorcerer and Satan were sometimes written, and invariably signed, in blood. In return for his soul the sorcerer would receive some specific gift or power. There is no evidence that the agreement afforded any protection against the Inquisition, however, for Satan only rarely intervened on behalf of his dupes. The production of such a document in court was usually sufficient to secure a verdict of guilty from the witch-fearing judges of the 17th century.

Gaufridi's Confession

Gaufridi's confession, which he had signed in prison, reflected the morbid state of mind of his accusers rather than that of the accused. He said he had eaten babies and celebrated a black mass at the sabbath, where he held the rank of Prince of the Synagogue, sprinkling the witches with consecrated wine, and he had exercised his magical power over women. 'More than a thousand persons have been poisoned by the irresistible attraction of my breath which filled them with passion. The Lady of la Palud, the mother of Madeleine, was fascinated like so many others. But Madeleine was taken with an unreasoned love and abandoned herself to me both in the Sabbath and outside the Sabbath . . . I was marked at the Sabbath of my contentment and I had Madeleine marked on her head, on her belly, on her legs, on her thighs, on her feet . . .'

In court Gaufridi strenuously repudiated the confession, declaring it to consist of fantasies in the minds of the Inquisitors, extorted from him by torture. But protest was useless; the signed confession and the pact were sufficient to damn any man in the eyes of 17th century Christians, and Gaufridi was found guilty and condemned to suffer death by fire. He was to be burned slowly over a pyre of bushes instead of logs, so that his anguish would be prolonged. His tormentors gave him no peace, and even after his sentence he was pestered with demands for the names of his accomplices.

Exquisite Torments

On 20 April his spirit weakened and his mind gave way to despair. He cried out to his tormentors that since nobody would listen to the truth he might as well admit everything. On 30 April 1611, with head and feet bare and with a rope around his neck, he went through the official mummery of asking pardon of God. He was handed over to the torturers again to undergo certain exquisite torments that had been reserved for him – the strappado and squassation.

The strappado was an instrument used to interrogate criminals, to obtain confessions and the names of accomplices. With arms tied behind his back, the prisoner was hoisted to the ceiling by means of a pulley, while at the same time heavy weights were tied to his feet in order to dislocate his shoulders. During this ordeal it was customary to apply the thumbscrews. This was regarded as a preparatory torture for the major torment that was to succeed it – squassation. This was an extreme form of strappado. The prisoner was hoisted to the ceiling with huge weights attached to his limbs, which were pulled from their sockets. The prisoner was allowed to hang for a time, when the rope was released, the fall being arrested with a fearful jerk a few inches from the floor, the shock of which was calculated to disjoint every bone in the body. Four applications of squassation were regarded as equivalent to a sentence of death.

After the torture, the shattered body of the still living Gaufridi was dragged on a hurdle through the streets for five hours, escorted by archers. Arriving at the place of execution, the priest was granted the unexpected mercy of strangulation before the fire was lit, thus escaping the ultimate horror of the original sentence. His lifeless body was then burned to ashes.

As if by the influence of a magic charm, the nun Madeleine suddenly became free of her tormenting devils, thus disposing of any doubts that may have remained about Gaufridi's guilt. Madeleine's fellow demoniac, Louise Capeau, was less fortunate, for she was harassed by demons to the end of her days, while the devil mania itself spread to the nuns of other convents before it finally subsided. Madeleine, however, never escaped from the watchful eyes of the Inquisition. Once the taint of diabolic possession had become associated with an individual, no one really knew what infamies the devils might venture on next.

A generation after Gaufridi's execution, the year 1642 saw her defending herself with difficulty against a charge of witchcraft. Ten years later she was prosecuted again and this time, incriminated by the Devil's marks which had reappeared on her body, was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment; she was released, at an advanced age, into the custody of a relative. Still under the eye of the Inquisition, Madeleine de Demandolx found freedom at last in death, in 1670 at the age of 77.

ERIC MAPLE

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Split Personality

The phenomena of *involuntary* possession are usually associated with pathological states of body and mind, such as are today diagnosed as epilepsy and hysteria. The main contributing factor, however, is a belief in the ubiquity of spirits, and in their power to enter into and take possession of human beings. The predisposing cause in all these cases is therefore psychical. Students of psychology are now familiar with the way in which within the one personality psychic states may arise which have all the appearance of separate personalities. The character assumed by these apparent alien personalities is largely determined by the nature of the current popular belief. Sometimes they are supposed to be animals. In Japan, for instance, possession by supposed foxes is prevalent. In other cases the possessing entities are held to be the spirits of departed ancestors or other relatives. In yet other instances the possessing entity is regarded as demonic.

Edward Langton
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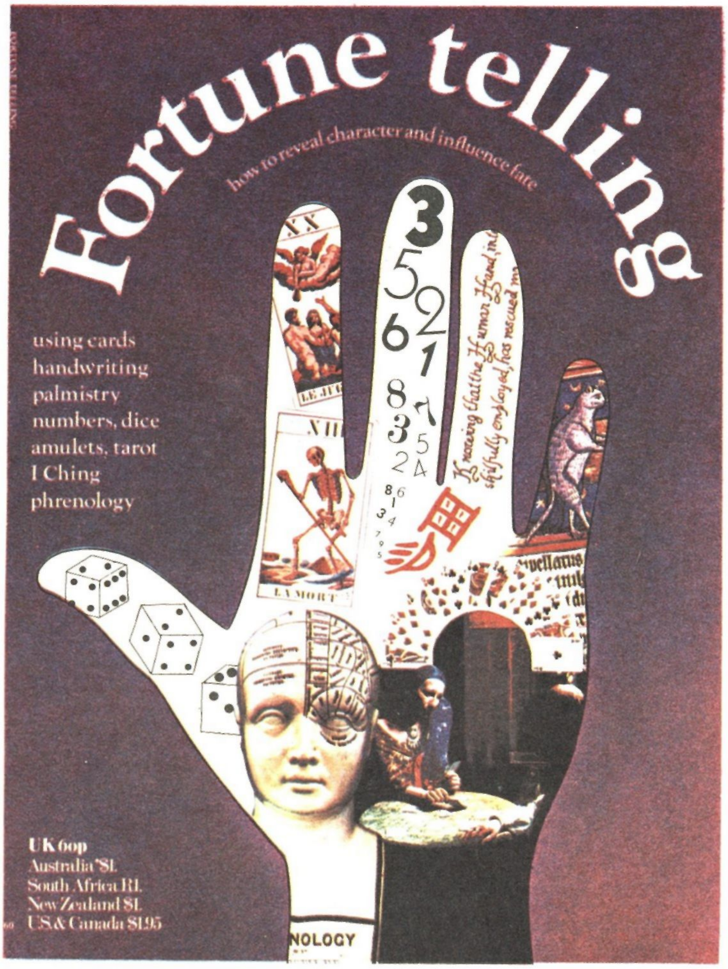
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